THE DANGERS OF SPIRITUALISM

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THE DANGERS OF SPIRITUALISM

THE
DANGERS OF SPIRITUALISM

BEING RECORDS OF PERSONAL EXPERIENCES WITH NOTES AND COMMENTS AND FIVE ILLUSTRATIONS

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BY

A MEMBER OF THE SOCIETY FOR PSYCHICAL RESEARCH

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INTRODUCTION

THE object which I have in view in publishing these personal experiences in the sphere of Psychical Research is of a twofold character.

I am, in the first place, anxious to add one more testimony to the reality and objectivity of many of those abnormal phenomena which have in recent years been so frequently the subject of inquiry and discussion, and which are so increasingly occupying the public interest. And I, secondly, desire to draw attention to certain great dangers which prolonged experience has shown me to attend their experimental investigation but which, to my mind, have not hitherto been brought with sufficient clearness and distinctness to the knowledge of the thinking and inquiring public.

That these dangers exist, and that they are at times of a very grave character—especially in the case of the inexperienced and uninitiated

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—can, in my opinion, only be denied by those who have but a mere superficial knowledge of the subject, or whose minds are swayed by preconceptions created by a popular and plausible but, as I believe, wholly mistaken spiritistic philosophy. In my own case scarcely a week passes without these dangers being brought home to my mind in a very striking and practical manner.

That, considering the amount of solid and indisputable evidence now in possession of the Society for Psychical Research, and the unhesitating testimony which has been given by eminent men of science, there should still be those who doubt or deny the occurrence of these phenomena, must seem at first sight more than surprising. But, when one bears in mind the past history of the inquiry, and the bad odour which has so long attached to the very name of Spiritualism, one can scarcely be astonished that hesitation and scepticism should still mark the attitude of so many minds, and that scientific men in general should not care to have their names associated with the matter. It is time alone and the steady increase of evidence, which are likely to work a change in this direction.

It should not, however, be assumed that, because certain well-known men do not appear as witnesses in favour of the reality of the phenomena, they must therefore be regarded as witnesses *against* them. Many of them, it is clear, are not as yet sufficiently acquainted or impressed with the evidence to approach the subject with any degree of confidence and interest, while others are fatally biassed by that still lingering materialistic conception of the Universe which is apt to deny the existence, on à priori grounds, of the abnormal or the supermaterial in any form. Their want of knowledge, therefore, would make it impossible for them to form any accurate opinion of the matter, and their opinion could not, in any case, be of any particular value. Exact knowledge, based upon prolonged and careful research, could alone qualify them to speak with authority. It remains a striking and significant fact that those well-known scientific men who, in consequence of some predilection for this form of research, or perhaps because of some unexplained personal experience, have been drawn into the inquiry, and who have given years of thought and study to it, have become thoroughly convinced of the reality of the

phenomena, and have not hesitated to say so. And it is, to my mind, certain beyond a doubt that this list of believers will be added to year by year, and that a time will come when the unbeliever will be found to be the truly unscientific person who, in the face of the overwhelming evidence, will find it increasingly difficult to justify his position.

But, so far as the general public are concerned, it is to my mind of the utmost importance that the objectivity and actual occurrence of the phenomena, or, to speak quite plainly, the action upon us of an unseen spiritual universe (which some of these phenomena certainly go to demonstrate) should be fully known and realised; for it seems to me that it is in this direction, in the denial of it, that the chief danger attending the inquiry will be found to lie. A person who believes, or who at least thinks it probable, that intelligent agencies, external to the inquirer, may be at work in producing the phenomena in question, is far more likely to proceed with caution and circumspection, even under favourable circumstances, than he who imagines that they may be attributed to some unknown and occult force, or to the action of his own

submerged, and hitherto but very little understood, personality. In the course of my own inquiries, I have again and again found that it was this latter sceptical attitude of the mind which was most apt to prove perilous and disastrous to the inquirer, and which was most frequently the real cause of his trouble.

I am inclined to think that a grave error of judgment is committed by the Society for Psychical Research in not sufficiently pointing out these dangers to their students and members. I do not wish to discuss the question here how far it may be justifiable, from a purely scientific point of view, to invite inexperienced men and women to try experiments which even a prominent man of science, and Vice-President of the Society, acknowledges to be attended by considerable risks; but there cannot, in any case, be a question as to the paramount duty of at least accompanying such invitations by an emphatic statement of the fact that dangers exist, and that inquirers must be on their guard against them. It is not improbable that this omission on the part of the Society, is largely due to that foolish hesitation (which is beginning to threaten its very life and existence) to speak out distinctly

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and *collectively* as to those very important results of the inquiry, respecting which most of its leading members have *individually* long made up their minds. The late Mr. Myers, in a communication which I received from him shortly before his death, acknowledged the justice of this plea, and informed me that he had sought to discharge his own duty in the matter by the compilation of a work—to be issued to the public, I understand, very shortly.

But, granting that the dangers here indicated do unquestionably exist, the very pertinent question at once presents itself: Is there, under these circumstances, any justification for the inquiry at all? Is any substantial good ever likely to come of it? It seems to me that, in the present state of our knowledge, it is extremely difficult to give an answer to this question which is not open to objections from some standpoint or other. The religious and Christian mind, naturally, will be inclined to answer it in the negative, and such an answer would be perfectly reasonable and intelligible. It is yet to be proved that, so far as Spiritualism is concerned, the results attained stand in anything like reasonable proportion to the perils incurred and to the mischief done.

But this answer could scarcely be expected to be the answer of the larger proportion of psychical students. The Society, it should be remembered, is a scientific Society, and its point of view is the scientific one. It is a question, in the first instance, of supernormal phenomena and of physical occurrences, at present but very partially known and understood, and therefore legitimate and interesting subjects for research and investigation.

It has to be borne in mind, moreover, that all modern Psychical Research is not concerned with "spirits" and Spiritualism. On the contrary, it occupies itself with an examination of the more complex phenomena of mind action, the study of mesmerism and hypnotism, and, in fact, with "inquiry into all kinds of phenomena apparently inexplicable by known laws of Nature." It is only in so far as all ordinary scientific theories fail to account for some of these phenomena, and as the action of "spirits" has to be resorted to in explanation of them, that the subject comes up as a necessary part of the inquiry. And, considering what the Society has accomplished in this direction, its many and valuable discoveries, it is surely more than difficult to offer valid

objections to the inquiry in this form. It seems to me to be more than probable that it is on this line of research alone that light is likely to be thrown upon a host of very obscure psychical phenomena, and that the real cause of many distressing mental disorders will become known. To such a purely scientific investigation the dangers spoken of do not, as Professor Barrett says, apply.

Again, it may not unfairly be urged that, granting the correctness of even the most extreme and unfavourable view of the matter, granting that the agencies operating are all of a low and evil type and influence, it might still be lawful for science to inquire how far such an influence can be said to extend, how far certain physical and mental conditions may be instrumental in inducing it, and whether there are any means by which it may be possible to counteract and to avoid it. From this and other points of view, it is clearly extremely difficult to say how far the sphere of so important an inquiry can be said to legitimately extend.

But the matter assumes a very different form when it is viewed from what I may term the spiritistic point of view; when these re-

searches are undertaken by persons devoid of all definite knowledge of the subject, and without any kind of scientific training, who, detaching Spiritualism from that chain of scientific subjects of which it should form a part, and in connection with which it should alone be examined, "venture upon these treacherous psychical quicksands, or attempt to build up a faith upon the same insecure foundation."[1] The danger becomes then both great and formidable and arises from the fact that such persons are, like the inexperienced chemist, operating with forces the character of which they do not understand, and the correlation of which to other forces they cannot possibly know. And while they may thus, of course, come upon a discovery which may prove a very gold-mine of scientific wealth, they may also blow themselves to pieces; and the latter is, as we all know, far more likely to be the case than the former.

All these things considered, it seemed to me that some of the experiences of an unprejudiced and independent inquirer, who has himself passed through many of these dangers, and who entered upon the inquiry with no kind of bias

[1] Professor W. F. Barrett.

or preconceptions, might prove helpful to many thoughtful minds at this present time. They present an aspect of this much-debated subject which is not very readily and willingly exposed to view by Spiritualists, but at which it is, nevertheless, of the utmost importance that fair-minded persons should take a good and full look.

The Notes and Comments which have been added may, of course, be disregarded as the views and conclusions of an individual mind; the facts related, strange as they may appear, cannot be gainsaid, and they are surely of a very striking and significant character.

I am inclined to think that, for good or evil, Spiritualism, in its modern form, has come to stay. This is, no doubt, partly due to a natural and unavoidable reaction from that crude materialistic creed which is too strongly opposed to our normal human instinct to form a permanent form of philosophy; partly, it is due to that hankering after the supernatural, which is a permanent characteristic of human nature. It is certain that an explanation of the mysterious phenomena under consideration will again and again be demanded, and that questions will be asked which must be

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answered. But it is clearly only by a full recognition of *all* the facts known to us, and by a legitimate interpretation of them, in the light of prolonged experience and careful observation, that those questions are likely to be answered correctly, and that the truth will ultimately be established.

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The Dangers of Spiritualism

I

Some years ago, while staying in the house of a family who had long been valued and intimate friends of mine, I discovered that one of the sons was possessed of very remarkable "psychic" gifts.

He was at that time about twenty-five or twenty-six years of age, and although he must, of course, have heard the subject of Spiritualism discussed, he certainly had no definite knowledge whatever of spiritistic phenomena, and I am confident that he would not have been able to tell what might be expected to occur in the presence of what is commonly termed "a physical medium."

I found that prolonged contact of his hands with any wooden article, such as a box, a table, or a board, would invariably cause peculiar and

distinctly perceptible vibrations to occur in these objects, and that these would, in the course of time, pass into continued and decidedly intelligent "knocks." By a system of interpretation which we suggested, and which we varied from time to time, we found that very astonishing communications could thus be elicited. These communications, although on the whole of an amusing and entertaining character, nevertheless occasionally caused undisguised amazement to different members of the family, who at this time, of course, had no definite theory as to their cause and origin.

Not very long after this, having become increasingly interested in psychical research, and having come to realise the immense importance of the subject, I determined to submit my young friend's extraordinary faculty to a somewhat stricter and more extended test, and I consequently invited him to stay with me at my house during his summer holidays. He came to me in excellent health and spirits, and fully prepared to enter into my proposed experiments with intelligence and interest.

I had, for some little time previous to his visit, devoted a good deal of time and study to what is termed "psychic" photography. The subject

was at that time engaging the attention of the Society for Psychical Research, and one or two articles dealing with it had already appeared in the *Proceedings*. I had been in communication with several learned and well-known scientific men, who were inclined to think that abnormal photographs could be, and had been, obtained, and who had given me some practical hints as to the conditions to be observed with a view to obtaining further scientific and really satisfactory evidence. One very experienced spiritualist, whose advice and opinion I had invited, wrote, to my astonishment:

"Hold a séance and ask the 'spirits'; they know much more about it all than we do. And if you have a medium, let him carry the plates close to his body for a little time previous to exposure. A saturation of the sensitive plates with the aura of the medium is more likely to lead to results than all the photographic tricks known to modern research."

When my friend, whom I will call P. F., arrived, I discussed with him the immense value and importance of the subject, and the duty of discovering the character and tendency of his mysterious gift, then so little known and so very little understood. He expressed his

perfect willingness to try some further experiments, and we agreed that they should be conducted in the *daylight*, that we should form no circle and hold no séance proper in the accepted orthodox way now so well known, and so often described. Indeed, on no single occasion during my friend's presence in my house was a séance proper held. All the important phenomena elicited occurred in the light, under ordinary normal conditions, and the only persons present at them were my wife, my friend, and myself.

On the day after his arrival, about three o'clock in the afternoon, P. F. placed his hand upon a Planchette, which almost immediately began to write in a very marked and decided manner, while a loud conversation, in which P. F. took an active part, was going on in the room. His left hand only was resting upon the Planchette, while I was standing behind his chair removing the sheets as they were being covered with the writing, and replacing them by fresh ones. My wife was all this time engaging P. F. in a conversation in order to avoid, as far as possible, any tendency of the mind to occupy itself with, or in any way to follow, the train of thought which was being

pursued in connection with the writing. My own mind was full of the subject of photography. I had arranged a series of questions which I was anxious to ask in the event of any "intelligence" presenting itself, and of the possibility of questions being intelligently answered. Although I had as yet no very definite theory as to the origin of these abnormal messages, I had made up my mind that I would, on this occasion, act on the assumption that the communicators were *persons* who were fully capable of understanding the drift and tenor of my questions, and consequently able to give intelligent answers. But the Planchette was racing madly across the paper, giving me no opportunity of making a request or of asking a question.

At my suggestion, P. F. took his hand off, and we examined the writing. What he had written was practically a moral essay of a not very high order, such as an earnest, truth-loving, but rather untrained mind might easily produce. It contained admonitions as to the importance of our duties during our earthly life, the shortness of time, the consequences which would inevitably follow after death upon our conduct here. It was a com-

munication which might well be supposed to emanate from the subconscious or "subliminal" mind of any person of fairly good character and ordinary education. As such it carried with it no particular value or evidence, and I consequently expressed a desire that opportunity might be given me of asking some questions to which I was particularly anxious to obtain answers.

P. F. again placed his hands upon the Planchette, which, to my astonishment, now wrote as follows:

"*I am unhappy, and when on earth I lived very inconsistently. Tell R.* (name given) *to live differently.*"

Here followed the initials of a name known to both of us:—that of a person who had died some years previously, and who was a near relative of the above-mentioned R.

Neither P. F. nor I knowing anything of the whereabouts of this latter R., and being quite unable to form any idea as to the probable truth of this message, I inquired:

"But where is R.? What can we do?"

The Planchette wrote:

"*Write to him, and pray for me. He is chained to evil spirits, and will be dragged*

down to my own state if no one helps him. Mother does not know the truth.

"*Write to G. at* —— (full name, etc., given), *and warn him of my sufferings. They are fearful! Pray for me, and do, please, all you can.*"

Now the remarkable thing is, that whatever view one might be disposed to entertain as to the probable source of this mystic message, and as to the value which may with safety be attached to it, this message has turned out to be absolutely reasonable and intelligible. It has, beyond question, demonstrated a knowledge, on the part of some unseen power or person of circumstances which at that time were wholly unknown both to P. F. and to myself, and which we only found upon inquiry to be strictly correct.

But I will not now enter upon a consideration of this aspect of the matter, but confine myself to stating what actually occurred.

Upon P. F. again placing his hand upon the Planchette, the following communication was written:

"*I am a suicide, and was brought here by a friend who knows you. I knew you at L——. You came and spoke to me a few days before my death. I want your prayers,*

and please write to my daughter. Warn men of the awful results of suicide.—G. C."

At first I had some difficulty in identifying my mysterious communicator, but one or two further questions elicited the fact that the message was supposed to emanate from a person in humble life with whom I had come in personal contact some years before, and to whom I had frequently spoken with regard to a failing to which he was subject and which was causing much family distress and dissension. He was given to drink, although otherwise a kindly and good-natured man, and devotedly attached to an only daughter who lived with him. It was quite true that I had spoken to him a few days before his death, for P. F. now told me, to my amazement, that a day or two after this last conversation with him, which I well remembered, the man had, while under the influence of drink, committed suicide. As I had left the town in which we then resided on the very day on which this conversation had taken place, I had never heard of his death. This fact was, however, known to P. F.

After this the Planchette ceased writing ; but not until a promise had been given that an intelligence should be found who would give

advice and direction in the matter of "psychic" photography.

On the following day I decided to make some experiments. For this purpose I took four plates from a newly-opened box, and placed them in two dark shutters (two plates in each shutter). It was a bright summer's day, and the light was sufficiently good to enable me to take some pictures indoors. While making the necessary preparations in my dining-room, and discussing the difficulties attending psychic photography, loud taps were heard on the table on which P. F.'s hand was resting. Upon inquiry, we received the following communication by Planchette writing:

"*I was a photographer in earth life, and was brought here by others to direct your experiments. I will help you to the best of my power. Let P. F. carry the plates near his body for some time and then make a long exposure. We will be present to assist you. You will be successful.*"

Loud taps and footsteps were heard in the room while the writing was going on, and when it was finished the pencil went on executing a number of very accurate drawings of various pieces of furniture, and

of persons both absent and present, which caused us no little astonishment, seeing that P. F. had not the least knowledge of drawing, and that he had never executed anything of the kind before. We now adjourned to the drawing-room for some tea, and I thought that our best plan would be to go for a short walk, during which P. F. was to carry the plates, placing them in close contact with his body by slipping them underneath his waistcoat, and tightly buttoning his coat over it. While discussing this proposal, P. F. was sitting on a sofa holding one of the dark shutters containing two plates in his hands. Our conversation was accompanied by loud knocks on the dark shutter, each knock causing a downward movement, as though a hand was pressing upon it; and these knocks were of so definite and intelligent a character that it was almost impossible to resist the impression that an intelligence, external to ourselves, and fully entering into the proposed experiment, was causing them.

We had not been walking more than ten minutes when P. F., who was carrying the plates on his body, and to whom the whole thing had so far been a source of great amuse-

ment, complained of a severe drawing pain near his heart. He declared that his sensations were not unlike those caused by the application of a mustard leaf. There was local heat and pain, and a feeling as though all his vitality was being "drawn out of him." At first I made light of these symptoms, feeling persuaded that they were caused by a kind of auto-suggestion, and I endeavoured to direct P. F.'s mind away from the matter by engaging him in a conversation on a subject which was of commanding interest to him. But, after a while, I noticed that his breathing was becoming laboured and that he was suffering from a kind of physical oppression which he was unable to suppress. Anxious not to carry the experiment too far, I quickly removed the shutters from his body, and slipped them into the outside pockets of my own coat. I was not conscious of any unusual sensation of any kind myself.

Upon our return home, and when P. F. seemed to have fully regained his normal condition and to have practically forgotten the incident, I made four exposures of varying duration. I cannot now remember very distinctly what time I allowed in the case of

the first three exposures. It varied between thirty and sixty seconds. But I well remember arranging for a long exposure in the case of the fourth plate; for, while I was getting it ready, loud knocks were calling our attention to the fact that the "photographer" had come, and that he would direct the experiment. We were told that P. F. must sit quietly and passively, and that the cap must not be replaced until a signal which was to consist of three loud knocks, had been given.

I exposed the plate in the ordinary way, retiring behind P. F.'s chair immediately I had taken off the cap, in order to leave him entirely at his ease. Quite four minutes must have elapsed when, listening in vain for the three knocks agreed upon, and feeling that the excessive time of exposure would entirely spoil my picture, I turned to look at P. F. He was deadly pale, and indeed seemed to be in a state of physical collapse. I therefore at once replaced the cap, and went to take a closer look at my friend. The moment I moved towards the camera, there was the sound of the three knocks. But P. F. was in a state of complete prostration; in fact, on the point of fainting. He staggered as he rose from his

chair, and was quite unable to speak to me for some little time; then he told me that he had from the moment of sitting down, had a sensation as though his very life-force was being drawn out of him. This sensation had increased in intensity every minute, and he declared that, but for his anxiety for the success of the experiment, he could not possibly have endured the strain any longer. He said that an intense numbness, such as might be caused by the continual application of cold, had come over the back of his head, so that he had ceased to be conscious of its existence altogether, and that his very life had seemed to him to be passing out of his body that way. With these sensations there had come over him a vague feeling of dread and alarm — a consciousness of some great danger threatening him. He continued in this dazed and dreamy condition for some considerable time after; but, his interest having been thoroughly aroused by the extraordinary sensations to which he had been subject, he insisted upon accompanying me into my dark room, and upon being present during the development of the plates.

The first three plates were developed in the

ordinary way, and showed no trace whatever of anything abnormal. But, when I came to the fourth plate and had just placed it in the developing dish, loud taps were heard on the table on which P. F.'s hand was resting, and the message was spelt out: "*You have a face on this plate, and you will be able to recognise it.*" I would point out that this communication was made while the plate was still in the dish and covered by the solution, and while it was still impossible for me to discover the slightest trace of any object upon it.

I exclaimed: "Give me the name before I look at the plate." Upon this there was spelt out the name of a person who had died some years previously, and whom I had known well, but with whom I had come in but very little personal contact during life. I completed the development of the plate, and upon examining it, we discovered at some little distance from P. F. a very fair representation of the features of the person referred to. I do not by any means claim this picture as a striking and unmistakable likeness; but the very remarkable fact remains that the features undoubtedly resemble those of the person in question, and that they are at any rate wholly unlike those of P. F. It

is also a circumstance worth recording that this person and P. F. had never met in life, and I am pretty certain that, prior to these occurrences, P. F. had not even heard his name mentioned.

But I was now beginning to realise that these subtle experiments, intensely interesting though they were, were not without a certain amount of danger, and I determined to exercise caution, and to be on my guard. Hitherto I had been under the impression that, if there were any real dangers in connection with spiritistic investigations, they were confined to the dark séance room, in which a number of persons of varying temperaments and modes of life, and with various ends in view, were apt to congregate; but that this could not possibly apply to a prosaic and sober-minded study of the phenomena, carried on for a scientific purpose, under perfectly normal conditions, and in broad daylight. Experience, however, very soon proved that this popular view of the matter is a wholly erroneous one.

I noticed that, with the occurrence of these peculiar phenomena, a subtle and very extraordinary change was passing over the mind and disposition of my young friend. By nature of

a very quiet and retiring, if not phlegmatic, temperament, he now became strangely animated and excited, and exhibited an almost hourly growing interest in these curious phenomena, and a desire to elicit further "communications" by Planchette. An indescribable something in him seemed to have received a sudden impulse, and to have awakened into life and activity. He spoke of the spirit-world and of spirits as though no rational person could entertain any doubt about their existence, and there was developed in him a power of discernment and of clairvoyance which was not only startling in its character and intensity, but which became positively dangerous. And it was clearly a power the exercise of which was passing wholly beyond his control. Naturally shy and retiring in conversation, P. F. now became extremely loquacious, talked incessantly but very interestingly, and seemed to find means of leading every conversation up to the one subject.

One afternoon, for instance, while two ladies, whom he had never seen before, were calling upon my wife, he suddenly jumped up from his chair, and in a very excited manner said to one

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of them: "You are living very unhappily with your husband, and you are wishing him dead, dead. I know it, and he will die. . . ."

Of course, I had him out of the room before he could finish his sentence, and I afterwards explained the matter as best I could. Unhappily, the correctness of this statement had to be admitted, although it was difficult, on any known theory, to account for the possession of knowledge thus suddenly and supernormally acquired.

On another occasion I had asked him to meet me at a place situated in some central part of the town. As he did not appear at the time agreed upon, I decided not to wait for him, but to call at several other places in the neighbourhood, and then to return for him in order to take him home to dinner.

I had finished my commissions, and was standing at the place agreed upon, waiting for him, when I saw him coming down the street, looking very excited and agitated. I found that, by some mysterious direction, he had followed me step by step in all my movements that morning, entering each place I had visited a minute or two after I had left it, and even crossing the streets exactly at the spot where I

had crossed them. He had not made a single mistake, although he was quite unable to account for the curious circumstance. He had never had a similar experience before. He had not been conscious of any peculiar or exceptional impressions himself, except that of an intelligence, his own and yet unlike his own, directing and guiding him.

A few days had thus elapsed when we yielded to the intense fascination which the study of this subject exercises upon the mind, and P. F. again placed his hand upon the Planchette. I had provided a large quantity of strong white paper and, standing behind him, I arranged to remove the sheets and to replace them by clean ones, while my wife was engaging him in conversation.

The Planchette again began a mad race across the paper immediately P. F. placed his hand upon it.

Again faces and objects were drawn with considerable skill and accuracy, and a disjointed sentence was written out here and there. After that the little board became quiet and steady, and gave what appeared to be intelligent answers to questions put in the audible voice.

The answers came very rapidly, and ap-

parently without thought and reflection, and, after a while, they were given to questions put mentally, or indicated by a few vague words only. The impression created on our minds was that the intelligence operating could in some way discern the drift of each question *before* it was uttered and formulated. I was, of course, acquainted with the late Mr. Myers' theory of the "subliminal" self, *i.e.*, the possibility of communications of this kind emanating from a subconscious or second personality of the psychic himself. But I must confess that this theory, whatever its merit and scientific value, did not fit the phenomena on these particular occasions. Circumstances were communicated to us which could not possibly be known to P. F. or myself, and there was throughout it all the clear indication of the presence of an intelligence operating wholly independently of us.

One communication, in particular, caused me very great astonishment, proving almost conclusively the presence of a mind other than that of P. F. And yet there was all the time the strong innate disposition of my own mind to explain the extraordinary phenomenon in some natural and normal way.

P. F. could not see what had been written, and, removing the sheets from the table and while he kept his hand upon the Planchette, I said aloud: "You claim to be an intelligence different from that of P. F. or any of us. But how can you prove it? How can we be certain that our minds are not at work in some strange and at present unknown way? Show us your independence by going to the other end of the room, and by stamping on the floor."

My request was immediately complied with; indeed, the stamping was of a very emphatic kind; and similar sounds were produced at any given part of the room, or upon any piece of furniture. All this time the Planchette, with P. F.'s hand upon it, remained motionless, and the writing was only resumed when we had expressed our satisfaction with the success of the experiment, and proposed to continue it.

By this time I had become convinced, by several slight and scarcely noticeable incidents, that in the production of the phenomena, one single intelligence had been at work from the beginning. There was a certain continuity of thought in the writing. Incidents which had occurred days before in the presence of

what was asserted to be a different personality, were evidently known and even referred to; statements were repeated by the use of the same phraseology and thought-form, and the entire character of the writing, when examined as a whole, bore the stamp of one single mind. It was clear, too, that we, and especially P. F., had been carefully watched. Our conversations, especially those in which we had expressed views and opinions as to the origin of the phenomena, frequently held out of doors, were apparently well known, and incidental comments, pointing to considerable reasoning and reflection, were made upon them. It was maintained throughout that the messages emanated from spirits—these the spirits of the dead—and that these had come, and were operating for our instruction and guidance. We were however left under the impression that *different* spirits were communicating through the agency of P. F. This did not, however, remove my own suspicions, and I was consequently incessantly on the watch to discover, if possible, a solution of the mystery. I had not very long to wait. The communications, which we were receiving by Planchette just then, were supposed to emanate from the "spirit photographer," who,

at the request of another spirit, had been brought to superintend our experiments, and who was anxious to induce us to repeat the process. As such he was, of course, supposed to be an entire stranger to us.

When a pause occurred in the process of writing, which had been going on with almost inconceivable rapidity, I suddenly asked the question: "How long have you known P. F.?" Unhesitatingly, and apparently without reflection, the answer came: "*About two years.*"

"And you are still the photographer who has so kindly come here to instruct us in the matter of our experiments?" Answer: "*Yes.*"

"But are you aware that you are now contradicting yourself? You have just told me that you had been brought here for the purpose of directing our experiments, and now you say that you have known P. F. for two years. How do you reconcile these two statements?"

There was a dead silence, during which the Planchette remained perfectly motionless, and during which we three felt extremely uncomfortable.

I inquired: "Are you still here?" Answer: "*Yes.*"

I asked again: "How do you reconcile the two contradictory statements?" Again a dead silence, and no movement of the Planchette.

What took place now will best be gathered from the following series of questions and answers, which were transcribed with care and accuracy immediately after the occurrence.

Q. You must surely see that you are placing us in a difficult position. We have no desire to doubt the truth of your statements, and we ask you again to explain. You know that we are keenly interested in the study of this subject, in the progress of which you also profess interest. But truthfulness in every detail is surely the first condition. I charge you, therefore, to tell us the whole truth.

A. (written in a deliberate and laboured way) "*I have been with P. F. for quite two years, and was hoping through him to become again identified with your world. I am miserable beyond description.*"

Q. We will listen to all you have to tell us; and if there is anything we can do for you, we will do it. But you must be honest

with us now, and must tell us how you came to attach yourself to P. F., and whether you are exercising any influence over him.

A. "*I was able to attach myself to P. F. through a lady.*"

Q. What is her name?

A. *S*—— (the name of a lady well known to P. F., whom he had, however, met only very occasionally).

Q. Is she a psychic?

A. "*Yes.*"

Q. What is your own name?

A. "*T. H. T. P. F. will know.*"

At this moment P. F., whose excitement and alarm seemed to be greatly increasing, called out a name corresponding to the three initials; and I inquired:

Q. Are you T. H. T.?

A. "*Yes.*"

It was the name of a person of perhaps sixty years of age, with whom P. F. had had a very unpleasant business experience. T. H. T. had been one of the directors of a company with which P. F., too, had been connected. He had been in the habit of speculating a good deal, and had habitually lived beyond his income. On one well-remembered occasion

he had requested P. F. to hand him the key to a safe in which valuable documents belonging to the company were kept. P. F. had replied that he had instructions not to part with the key or to open the safe except in the presence of at least two of the directors. T. H. T. had then become very angry and excited, but P. F. remaining firm, he had left the office. A few days later he had destroyed himself. Inquiry into his affairs had shown that he was a ruined man, and the probability, of course, is that, by the temporary use of some documents, he had hoped to tide over his difficulties and to avoid a final catastrophe. The outline of the story was given me by P. F. upon the name being spelt out, and the intense look of alarm and fear depicted upon his face, showed only too clearly what view P. F. had formed as to the character of the man. Subsequent private inquiry on my own part, in the city and of persons wholly unknown to P. F., confirmed the truth respecting the financial embarrassment of T. H. T., and his violent death. The circumstances respecting the documents could not, of course, be known to any outsider.

I now inquired :

Q. What is your aim in thus attaching yourself to P. F.?

A. "*He obstructed my plans when on earth, and caused my ruin. I have tried all I could to gain control of him, and very nearly had possession. Do pray that I may become happier, and also that I may leave him.*"

Q. We will do what we can; indeed, all in our power. But you must now part with P. F., who, as you see, is greatly alarmed.

A. "*I shall be losing my power when his own will becomes stronger. Keep a careful watch over him for a time, and do pray for me—a wretched sinner.*"

Q. What can we do to facilitate the separation?

A. "*I am unable at present to leave him entirely. He must exercise his power of will and resist me. Pray for me!*"

After this, the communication ceased entirely, and P. F. being in a very disturbed mental condition, I decided that the experiment, too, must cease—must cease, never to be resumed.

Now, whatever theory one might be disposed to adopt in explanation of this extra-

ordinary occurrence, there could be no manner of doubt that experiments of this sort were attended by very grave dangers, and that from the very nature of the experiment it was almost impossible to guard against them. Little as one might feel disposed to adopt the notion of the presence and action of unseen evil intelligences, the inference was almost inevitable, and was certainly forced upon all the three of us who were present during these strange occurrences. We came away from them strongly convinced that we had been in communication with a being or beings possessed of mind and intelligence like our own, and wholly independent of our own, but of a low moral order, and of subtle and extraordinary malice and cunning. P. F. declared that numerous incidents and occurrences throughout the past two years of his life, which had often strangely puzzled him, were now fully and satisfactorily explained. He told me that, contrary to his natural religious temperament and disposition, thoughts had occasionally rushed through his mind, the malice of which had quite startled him ; and that temptations to which he had all his life been a stranger had again and again been suggested to him. He freely admitted that he had not always resisted

these temptations; that he had frequently neglected his accustomed religious duties, and that his moral tone (and all this his family subsequently admitted) had become decidedly lowered.

Our experiments having thus come to an unexpected and very painful close, I made it my business to get my young friend to take a calm and rational view of the matter, and to point out to him the dangers which he had so evidently escaped. On the day of the last recorded sitting, I took him for a long country walk, during which I endeavoured to direct his mind to other matters. On our return home he was perfectly quiet and self-possessed, expressed himself grateful for the warning he had received, and for the knowledge of unseen things which he had thus acquired. Before he left the drawing-room, and in order to fully assure him that the influence had entirely departed, and that he need have no further fear, I inquired aloud:

"T. H. T., are you still here?"

Three distinct flicking sounds on P. F.'s knee, accompanied by corresponding impressions of fingers, were distinctly audible, and I almost at once felt that I had made a mistake.

I regretted my want of care and caution. P. F. was evidently startled, comforted himself, however, with the reflection that the sounds were so very faint, and that his own mind seemed now to be perfectly free from any extraneous control or influence. Early in the evening he retired to his room, which was situated on the second floor immediately above my own bedroom.

I retired about an hour later, perhaps at twelve o'clock, and I must have been asleep quite an hour and a half, when I was suddenly startled by a noise like that of hammering, and of occasional footsteps clearly emanating from the bedroom occupied by my friend. Slipping into my dressing-gown and hurrying upstairs, I found him pacing up and down the room in a state of violent agitation. He was partially dressed and the lamp was burning, but there was no need to offer any explanation as to the cause of the disturbance. The strange noises, which appeared to have ceased at the moment of my entrance, recommenced almost immediately with the utmost vigour, and I became the witness of a scene such as I have never witnessed before, and as will not be effaced from my memory for many a day. A hundred hands seemed to be hammering away on walls

and doors and table and bed, and every now and then there was the sound of feet tramping along the floor. Nothing that we said or did seemed to have the slightest effect upon the authors or causes of the strange phenomenon, and both P. F. and myself simply sat on the bed in a state of helplessness and bewilderment. For a time I had to keep my hand upon the lamp which was standing on a small table, fearing every moment that it might be seized and that some calamity might ensue. When I had explained matters to my wife, and had offered some sort of explanation to the female servants, who were sleeping on the same floor, and who had been startled by the noises, I returned to spend the rest of the night with my distracted friend. Here was an exhibition of the objectivity of the phenomena with a vengeance! To us two, sitting in that spirit-haunted room, and listening to the noises which were disturbing the household, and which we could not control, there seemed at that moment nothing so ludicrous as the sceptical attitude of the conventional man of science, who denied the objectivity of the phenomenon, but who clearly did not know what he was talking about. Ten minutes in that little bedroom

would infallibly have made a convert of him, and would have blown his scientific theories to the winds. It seemed as though the very rabble of the unseen world had been let loose in order to exhibit to us the power of its malice and of its impotent rage. I have since then, however, heard of other instances in which manifestations of this kind have occurred in consequence of "the spirits" having been found out, and of their designs having been frustrated.

As morning dawned the noises gradually ceased, the sounds becoming fainter and fainter; and with the advent of daylight my friend obtained some refreshing sleep. On the following night there was no further objective disturbance. P. F. soon regained his good health and spirits, and now the memory only of these extraordinary occurrences has remained with us.

P. F. has since gone abroad, and has not, I am confident, felt tempted to renew his acquaintance with the "kind friends" of the spirit world.

II

COMMUNICATED TO ME IN THE COURSE OF MY RESEARCHES

UNTIL the spring of 1894 my life had been a quiet and uneventful one. I was at that time third master at a good country grammar school, and held a Government certificate. I was also an undergraduate of an Irish University, and was studying to complete my B.A. degree. I was thirty-six years of age, and single; a man of independent and self-reliant character, who had attained to his position entirely by his own efforts. I was very fond of my work, and was looked upon as a good teacher. I was an omnivorous reader, intelligently interested in public affairs, and was in the enjoyment of excellent health. I never experienced the slightest taste for what may be termed "low company"; on the contrary, my friends were superior and educated people, and I certainly

never indulged in an excessive use of stimulants. With the exception of an occasional evening passed at a friend's house, I generally spent my time at home, engaged with music, reading, or gardening. Occasionally I went for a good walk.

I was in the habit of regularly reading the *Review of Reviews*, and in the April number of 1894, I think, there was an article, entitled "On the Eve of the Fourth Dimension," with instances of the power of "telepathy," which interested me very much, and which led me to try some experiments for myself.

I was at that time living in one of the Midland counties, and I fixed upon a friend who was living at D——, in Kent. I ought, perhaps, to mention that this friend had been a great drinker, and a source of much anxiety to his family. I had somehow acquired a great influence over him, and, although I could never prevail upon him to give up the habit entirely, I had managed to keep him pretty straight, and he was certainly never so bad, after I had got hold of him, as he had been before. In January, 1894, this friend had been married; had gone to live at D——; and had been going on so well that I was beginning to

be quite hopeful respecting the future. After reading the article referred to, I sat down in the quiet of my room, and tried to communicate with him. The first evening and the second I was not successful, but I tried again, and, after a few more attempts, was fairly astounded at what occurred. My hand wrote fluently straight, well-formed sentences, which were certainly quite unpremeditated by me. Only about half, however, of what was thus communicated proved, upon inquiry, to be true. This writing now went on every evening for about a fortnight without anything extraordinary or striking occurring. One night, however, after I had been engaged writing for some time, and things had gone on as usual until about 11 p.m., my hand suddenly wrote: "*I am sleepy. Gone to bed, Charlie.*" I stopped at once, and thought I would read a little before going to bed myself. I had just begun doing so when I felt a peculiar twitching in my wrist and fingers, which, after a while, became almost unbearable. I therefore again took the pencil, thinking my friend might perhaps want to say something more. At first the pencil merely jumped about, then it scribbled a mass of lines, partly in one direction, partly

in another, then it circled round and round like some mad thing, darting off at an angle, and trying to shape a letter or two; but presently it began to write single words, nothing connected, then some more scribble, and so on.

At last—I shall never forget it—the pencil settled down to steady writing, and there came the most filthy, foul, vile language, such as my own mind could never have imagined. This was accompanied by abominable drawings, which were done in a sort of block shading, beginning at a central point, and gradually assuming a definite shape. A lot of writing—sometimes quite meaningless to me—followed, with more drawings, this phrase constantly recurring: "*Send me some ——; you want me, Jack W——*," and the name Jack W—— repeated over and over again. Not a word from my friend with whom I was seeking to communicate, nothing but this filthy language and this horrible Jack W——.

All this was quite unexpected by me, and I solemnly avow that nothing like it had ever been in my own thoughts and mind. In fact, I had no idea whatever as to what was coming, but sat just like one fascinated and spell-bound,

wondering what it all meant. After a while I got somewhat alarmed, and said to myself that the devil certainly seemed to be having his game with me. I stopped the writing and went to bed. This must have been about 3 a.m. I could not sleep, however, because words and pictures of fire continued to flash through my brain during the rest of the night. The following day I was completely worn out, moving about in a dazed, dreamy state, having no other desire but to lie down and to rest. I went to bed early that night, but about midnight I felt impelled to get up and get the pencil. All this Jack W—— again, and the same sort of writing! After this, this kind of thing went on every night for more than a week, when I began to feel seriously ill. I made a great effort, in which I at last succeeded, in resisting the impulse, and since then I have had nothing more to do with telepathic experiments. I had never known any person by the name of Jack W——, nor, as I afterwards ascertained, had my friend at D——. Without mentioning particulars, however, I inquired of several people whether they had ever heard of Jack W——. At last someone said to me, "Oh yes, I knew him! He was an awful character!

he died in W—— Asylum." After this I ceased all inquiries connected with the matter, destroyed the writing, and made up my mind to forget the whole thing.

But now comes the worst part of the whole story. My whole being had manifestly undergone a change; I seemed to have received another nature—gross, vile, sensual, originating the most vile and abominable ideas, such as had never formerly entered into my mental life. My old self was still there, thank God! I have never quite lost that. But, although rebellious and disgusted, it nevertheless seemed powerless against the stronger, evil influence which was dominating it. It was as if some unclean spirit had taken possession of me, had driven out my old self, and was using my mind and body for its own vile purposes. At first, I fought and struggled against it, and tried to rouse myself; but it was all to no purpose. All the day long my body was tired, weighed down by a weary, languid, care-for-nothing feeling. I had no desire but to lie down and to let my thoughts go wandering. I lost interest in everything I used to delight in in former times. I dropped my studies; my hobbies had no longer any charm for me;

everything seemed an effort and a trouble. I have read of the mental and physical condition of opium-smokers, and it certainly seemed to me as if I was overpowered by a kind of moral opium which simply rendered me powerless to make any more effort. Only when evening came I seemed capable of moving. I then began to grow restless. If I went to bed I could not sleep, but simply lay awake, my brain all activity, imagining, picturing the most wretched abominations. Dreading, therefore, to go to bed, I used to go out. Invariably I would find myself proceeding to some low public-house—not to drink, but just to be in the company of, and to be hob-nob with, any dirty low fellow I would find there. And, strange to say, such would receive me just as one of themselves, while I felt perfectly at home with them—*I* who had never been in the habit of frequenting the bar of even the most respectable public-house. I had no desire whatever to go among decent people of my own station in life; on the contrary, I liked the company I met with in these places; I liked the low, foul conversation; I revelled in the filthy talk! I would treat my companions to drink, and positively enjoyed seeing them drunk.

The smell of the stale beer, of the rank tobacco, their crude familiarities, were like tonics to me. The weariness would go; I would sing and laugh with the loudest of them, thinking it a fine thing to be called "a jolly good chap." I could never get drunk myself; a single pint of beer would make me sick. When morning came I would get up, haggard, tired, ashamed, disgusted, afraid to meet any person of my acquaintance. I can't describe all the horrible things I went through, some of them veritable orgies. Time passed, things gradually got worse; I dropped my old friends, or they dropped me. I became unsettled and miserable in my work; I felt that I could not remain in my place, that I must get away. With new scenes and new faces I might get the better of this thing. So I sent in my resignation and left the town. I used to believe that a man could shape his own life, but, since that eventful night, Fate has been dead against me. Although I had good testimonials and references, to all my applications for a new place I received the invariable reply that "a younger man was wanted!" I tried to find some other occupation, but failed. I grew disheartened, and, after a while, worth-

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less and good-for-nothing. I would gladly welcome death, but I shrink from suicide, although I feel certain it will come to that soon. At present I am living an idle, aimless life, just existing on the payment I obtain for a few hours' private teaching a week, and a few shillings picked up playing the piano in public-houses. I am without hopes, prospects, or friends. What is there to live for?

And now let me draw attention to one or two curious points in my history. It is very difficult to explain exactly the relationship between the two natures inhabiting my body. I shall make myself better understood if I use the word *ego* to signify my own mental identity, and *alter* that of the other. By *I* and *me* I mean my physical self (common to both). Both of them are *I;* but the two are now never "in residence" at the same time. There is now no struggle for mastery. The change is imperceptible. I may now be *ego*, when I suddenly find myself *alter*. This latter, without warning, comes and takes possession, drives out *ego*, or paralyses him, does what he likes, and just as suddenly goes. He just ignores, never remembers, or thinks of *ego*. *Ego*, on the contrary, has a vivid

recollection of *alter*, is disgusted with him, loathes him, fears him, looks upon him as a vile, sensual thief, who has robbed him (*ego*) of all that made life worth living. When I am *alter* I am strong, active in mind and body, full of devilry, daring anything, imagining and enjoying all evil. When *alter* goes, poor, pitiful *ego* just creeps back into a weak, exhausted body, weary, tired of life, full of remorse, making good resolutions, yet having no power to carry them out. There is one other point. If I can manage to get off into a good sleep, *alter* seems to be powerless. My dreams are always pleasant, mostly of people and places of the good old times, never of anything bad. It is only when I am awake, and when my mind is unemployed, that *alter* catches me. My worst time is at night. If I go to bed without being able to sleep, *alter* is in full possession, running riot with my imagination till the morning.

There may have been no connection between my dabbling in telepathy and this other thing, but, rightly or wrongly, I believe that on that night some unclean spirit attached itself to me, gradually gaining influence over my nature, and in the end making me his mere slave. For

very shame, I have been obliged to keep the whole matter to myself. People sometimes marvel (and well they might) at the change which has come over me. My sense of fairness will not permit me to put the whole blame upon telepathy; there may have been some unconscious error on my part, or some circumstance unknown to me may have caused this alteration in my life. The fact itself remains: I know what I was before that evening, and I know what I have been since.

I have only succeeded in writing this by fits and starts when I am *ego; alter* nearly threw it all into the fire last evening, calling it a d—d lot of rubbish.

III

I AM well aware that doubts are still entertained, even in the best informed quarters, as to the possibility of obtaining what has been called "spirit photographs." This sceptical attitude of mind is, I think, fully justified, seeing that a very vast amount of fraud has been practised in this direction, and that our present knowledge of photography, and of what the camera will do, is not sufficiently exact to enable experts to speak with authority and certainty. Abnormal appearances have, it is well known, been discovered on plates apparently taken from freshly bought and opened packets and exposed under strict test conditions; but it is admitted that the evidence, in almost every case, is not altogether perfect, and that there is invariably room for doubt. Then there is the theory of "thought emanations"—the possibility of ob-

taining pictures of the thought creations of certain peculiarly organised persons, who are said to "project" the supposed spirit picture from the recesses of their own inner psychical or nerve personality. But this latter theory has not, in spite of much bold assertion and of some indefinite experiment, received much confirmation of late, and it is one which seems to me to present greater scientific and photographic difficulties than the simple spirit hypothesis. Some scientific men seem to be under the impression that any cumbrous hypothesis, however involved and incredible it may be, is infinitely better and more scientific than the simple explanation which the facts themselves appear to suggest, and which does not really involve half these difficulties.

I do not personally propose to defend any theory as to the origin of these abnormal pictures. I feel that, in this particular field of research, the inquiry has not gone far enough to enable one to speak with any high degree of certainty. I simply propose to offer the evidence which, as a member of the Society, I have gathered in the course of my inquiries extending over a number of years, and which seems to my mind to tell strongly in favour of

the objective character of the phenomena in question.

It will be seen from my earlier experiment, described on pp. 25-30, that I had good reason for believing in the possibility of obtaining these pictures, and in the action of independent intelligences in connection with them. This view was confirmed by the opinion expressed by the very highest authority on photography in England, to whom I had submitted the plate, and who, after showing it to other experts, had written to me as follows :

"I would give a good deal if I were able to obtain, under reasonable test conditions, such a picture as yours. By all means continue your investigations in this direction, and you will have your reward in greater success."

It seemed clear to me that if "spirits," or intelligences of any kind, are really able to clothe themselves in a finely organised body extracted, as they maintain, from the nerve substance of those assisting at such an experiment, and, under favourable conditions, to "materialise" a face or a hand or even the entire body, there should be no à priori difficulty in obtaining impressions of such materialisations on the sensitive plate. On the contrary, the probability would be alto-

gether in that direction, since it had been shown to be possible to obtain pictures of objects which are entirely invisible to the natural eye. Experienced spiritists maintain that the spirit forms materialised assume a condition of density and become visible in proportion to the amount of "psychic" or nerve-power which is furnished by the medium and the sitters, and that when this power is not present in sufficient degree, or does not, for some reason or other, detach itself very readily, a materialisation may still take place, yet it may not become objectively visible, except perhaps to persons very peculiarly gifted. But such a delicately organised form, having an objective existence, might surely be expected to impress itself upon the sensitive plate!

At any rate, there remained the fact of the abnormal picture already described. That fact I could not get over, whatever explanations I might attempt. I had obtained it with my own camera, under more than satisfactory conditions, and the peculiar circumstances attending it spoke strongly in favour of its genuineness. And what had been accomplished once might surely be accomplished again!

To me personally this form of the inquiry had the greatest possible attraction, because I

felt that it was only by means of the camera that the much debated question as to the actual objective existence of these strange intelligences would be finally and satisfactorily settled.

There was, however, the moral aspect of the matter. My earlier experience had shown that these photographic experiments were, under certain conditions at least, attended by considerable dangers, and it seemed to me to be unjustifiable to repeat them, so long as I knew of no means by which these dangers might be averted and by which the experiment might be made with absolute safety to the psychic. Still, I continued to study the matter, not altogether without a hope that some day these difficulties might be got over, and that the camera might be made to decide the question as to the objectivity of the phenomena under dispute, once and for all.

In the course of my inquiries, some years subsequent to the events related on p. 25, I came across a professional photographer who thoroughly believed in psychic photography, and who maintained that he had obtained genuine pictures. He had, of course, suffered a good deal on this account at the hands of a

sceptical public and of a certain class of psychical researchers, who appear to be under the impression that they are the only honest people in this world, and that Providence has bestowed upon them very special qualifications for the detection of fraud. In this instance, at any rate, few of them seem to have taken any pains to carefully and systematically study the matter, and to look for evidence apart from those purely mechanical tests, which consist in the manipulation of the camera and the observation of plates, etc.

I must confess that I have always felt that, in the case of the professional photographer, the purely photographic evidence alone would, under the most favourable circumstances, leave much to be desired, and that it could never in any case be considered quite perfect. There are circumstances connected with the process of preparing, exposing, and developing a plate which, under the most satisfactory conditions, may make some subtle manipulation of the plate conceivable and possible, and there may consequently be tricks which will escape the observation of the most cautious mind, and of the most vigilant and experienced eye. I could therefore never see any advantage in increasing

the severity of the test conditions by selecting plates, examining the camera and the lens, and by keeping an eye upon the developing dish. The fact that abnormal pictures had been obtained under the strictest conditions, but that they had nevertheless been rejected as worthless by experts, destroyed, to my mind, any force of evidence which might be said to attach to these pictures, and which might go to impress the public mind. It seemed to me that any really good evidence would have to be sought for in a different direction altogether. I had therefore already made up my mind that, any further opportunity of research presenting itself, I would adopt a line of my own in the pursuit of my investigations, and would ignore all that I had heard for or against the genuineness of the pictures from a purely photographic point of view.

There seemed, in the case of my new friend, no moral objection to the experiment. He had obtained the pictures in question in his studio in broad daylight and under perfectly ordinary normal conditions. He had no need of a "circle," or séance, or "conditions," and his time of exposure was no more than the time allowed for ordinary pictures. He de-

clared, moreover, that he was not conscious of any loss of vital power or of nervous energy in connection with the process, that he could eat and sleep well, and that his health was normal. He had himself become convinced that the mysterious photographs were produced by intelligences external to and independent of the operator, but that they were in some unexplained way connected with his own physical or psychical personality. After many visits to his studio, I succeeded in thoroughly gaining his confidence so that I found him almost always ready to agree to any experiment I might propose. He assented to my bringing my own marked plates, placed beforehand in the dark shutter, to my taking up any attitude I liked in front of the camera, and to my watching the entire process of development in his dark room. It thus became my habit to go to his studio at all odd times, often dropping in for a chat quite unexpectedly, and then proposing to sit for a picture. It was but seldom that he raised any objection to an experiment thus suggested. When he did so, it was generally on account of his health. Experience had taught him that indisposition, mental or physical, inter-

I.

fered with the success of the experiment—a circumstance which he attributed to the fact that the delicate nerve emanations, which the "intelligences" require in order to make themselves visible, were not then of that quality which was necessary in order to impress the psychic form upon the plate. Repeated experiments, willingly assented to in the interest of this wonderful science, strangely confirmed this view. The plates obtained under these conditions invariably disclosed a vague, cloud-like formation hovering near my own person, and sometimes showing distinct outlines of a form. (See Illustration I.) In one or two instances features would become distinctly visible in this cloud-like emanation on the third or fourth plate—the very gradualness of the development of the form seeming to me to tell in favour of the genuineness of the pictures. I have thus obtained an infinite variety of pictures on plates prepared by myself, and remaining under my constant observation to the last. Some of them are extremely interesting, and have quite a history of their own; but they are all photographically of much the same value. Experienced photographers who have seen

them maintain that they could be produced normally, although they also admit that this could not possibly be done under the conditions stated.

Now, all persons acquainted with psychical research are well aware that the best evidence for the genuineness of phenomena is not generally to be found in the great broad facts which are likely to appeal to the general public, but rather in some trivial and unexpected detail—in some little circumstance unobserved perhaps by the casual experimenter and wholly unimportant in itself, but nevertheless furnishing striking and unforeseen evidence strangely and powerfully impressing the mind. This is certainly the case with regard to these pictures, even from the purely photographic point of view. Without absolutely committing myself to any theory as to their origin, and without denying in the very least that something very similar has been and can be produced quite naturally and normally, I am convinced, for more reasons than one, and from several years' close study of the subject, that the pictures I have obtained in that way are genuine ones, *i.e.*, that they are not produced by any photographic trick not generally known. I have,

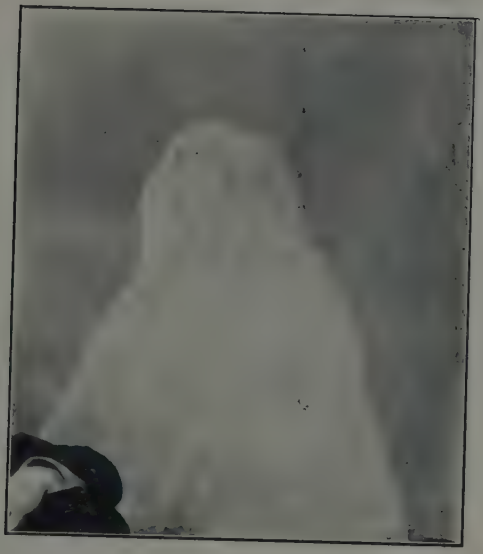
however, evidence in favour of this view of the matter, which is wholly independent of the photographic argument. The circumstances of the case are briefly these:

Finding myself one winter's morning unexpectedly near the studio in question, I felt tempted to look in and have a talk about psychical matters. I found my photographer friend busily engaged with his ordinary work, but evidently pleased to see me and to discuss with me the problem of psychic photography, in which he had himself become deeply interested. We talked a good deal about fresh "tests," "favourable conditions," and "evidence," and we agreed as to the difficulties which stood in the way of obtaining the latter. He thought that photographically the evidence was as perfect as it was ever likely to be, but that our difficulties were due to our ignorance of the laws which govern the phenomena. I expressed it as my opinion that good evidence would have to be sought for in a different direction altogether, since I had come to see that it could never photographically be of such a character as to carry conviction to any outside mind.

Putting on my hat and opening the

door, I was on the point of leaving the studio, when the thought occurred to me to make an experiment on the spur of the moment, and at a time when I had not been expected. My friend consented at once. As I had no marked plates with me, I felt that we could not, under any circumstances, create "test" conditions, and I consequently took no trouble whatever about the matter. He put two of his own plates into a dark shutter, left me to arrange myself in front of the camera, and made an exposure in the ordinary way. The result was Picture IIA., the face and upper part of which would seem to be those of a woman shrouded in "psychic" drapery. I could not recognise the features as those of any person I had known, although they seemed familiar to me, and I expressed my regret at the circumstance. At this moment there flashed across my memory the details of a statement which had, some months before, been made in my presence and which was to the effect that these psychic figures in all probability possessed the power of assuming *any* form, and that the drapery was probably only adopted because it facilitated the shaping of some kind of body, and because it involved

IIA.



the least amount of expenditure of psychic force. Following out this thought, it occurred to me that it would be an interesting experiment to test the truth of this assertion and to ascertain whether any kind of transformation was possible. Assuming, therefore, the presence of an intelligent being which could hear and see me, I exclaimed :

"I cannot recognise you in the drapery which you have assumed in this picture ; but I might do so if I were to see you in the dress you last wore in your earth life. I am told that it is merely a question of memory, and that you can change your appearance. Try and think of what you were and looked like before you passed out of this life, and we will make another exposure."

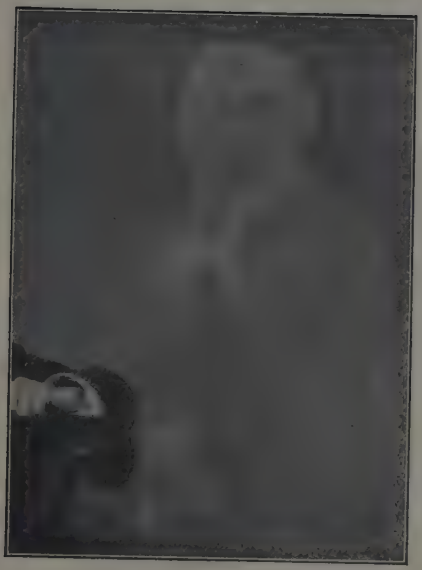
The photographer smiled at the boldness of my experiment ; but I took my place again before the camera. He exposed the second plate, and the result may be seen in Picture IIB. I have not been able to identify the person ; but this clearly is not the important point in estimating the value of the experiment. The question was : Is the face on the second plate that of the first plate ? We examined the faces very closely as soon as we had

printed the pictures, and the magnifying glass certainly disclosed a very striking likeness. But the predisposed mind, I have reason to know, is no very reliable judge. We are very apt to see what we wish to see. I have consequently submitted the pictures to what I believe to be the highest authority on this subject in England, requesting that no pains might be spared to discover the truth, with the result that the faces were pronounced to be identical.[1]

It will be seen that the evidence in favour of the genuineness of these pictures (whatever their origin) is very strong in this instance, and that it is quite independent of anything that might be urged from the photographic point of view. Any other theory clearly involves difficulties which, to say the least, make it infinitely more cumbrous and incredible. It will be remembered that I had on this occasion no appointment with the photographer, and that I had myself no intention of making any experiment. The first photograph was taken entirely on the spur of the moment, and it was only *after*

[1] The reproductions here given do not, of course, show the identity of the faces as conclusively as the original photographs.

IIB.



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I had obtained it that the thought of suggesting the transformation entered my mind. I do not know what modern photography is able to accomplish, but I do know that the most ingenious photographer cannot prepare for an experiment which the experimenter himself has not even contemplated when he sets to work, and which is only suggested to his mind by what occurs in the process.

It is clear that, in this instance, the solution of the problem must be sought for elsewhere, and that the evidence in favour of the action of abnormal agencies is exceptionally strong. It increases in force when other important circumstances, such as the appearance of the forms on marked and observed plates, the curious cloud-like formations, and other things, are borne in mind. It does not necessarily follow, of course, that these forms, because they are genuine, are actually representations of the dead. That is a different question altogether, and one into which I do not wish to enter here. All I claim is that the plates disclose the existence of a certain force or matter at present not known to a great many scientists, and the existence of an intelligence or intelligences, other than those of the operators, who are

capable, under certain conditions, of causing that force or matter to assume certain forms. This, to my mind, is an undeniable fact, which can be ascertained by any person who chooses to investigate carefully and patiently, and who is prepared to expend upon the great problems of human life as much time and interest as they expend upon the examination of "a new species of useless fish or of a new lump of shining dirt."

Illustration No. III. is interesting for the following reason. I had lost a relative who had taken a great deal of interest in my researches, and who told me before his death that he would show himself, and thus advance our knowledge of this great subject, if it was at all possible and consistent with the laws of his new state to do so. After his death several attempts had been made to obtain a sign from him. I considered all those obtained through clairvoyants as evidentially worthless. But I hesitated to give to the photographer any kind of information as to the physical appearance of my relative, lest his mind should in any way exercise itself in the matter. On one occasion, however, I fully and entirely described to him, so far as that is possible, his distinc-

III.

tive physical characteristics : peculiar shape of nose, high forehead, grey whiskers, etc., etc. I then fixed my attention strongly upon him and after a while we made an exposure in the ordinary way. In the picture obtained I traced all the characteristics which I had thus described *without* however the familiar features of my relative, or indeed anything approaching them.

Did the subliminal self of the photographer, instructed by my description, consciously or unconsciously form and project the face as well as the psychic substance? Or were there eavesdropping intelligences about who, having heard my description, made a bold attempt at a presentation of the physical appearance of the dead? For more reasons than one, I strongly incline to the latter hypothesis.

Unfortunately, circumstances which have since come to my knowledge leave no doubt on my mind that, in this instance too, the moral dangers attending a frequent repetition of these experiments are not absent. They are of the character already described in my earlier paper, and they have gone to strongly confirm the views which I then formed of the matter.

IV

In the course of my investigations, some time ago, I made the personal acquaintance of a gentleman who was passing through a very extraordinary experience. As his case presented several exceptionally striking and unique features from the psychological point of view, I became intensely interested, and he was for some weeks a frequent visitor at my house. He was a youngish man, of superior birth and education, and had been connected with one of the public services. The extraordinary transformation, however, which had swept over his mental and moral life, in consequence of his spiritistic experiments, had made it necessary for him to abstain from every kind of intellectual work. When I first met him he had just returned from a tour on the Continent, in the course of which he had consulted several great authorities on mental and nervous disease, and he had in some measure recovered his physical health. His

mental condition, however, had remained entirely unchanged, and he had now practically made up his mind that there was no further prospect of a cure being effected.

I saw in him no indication whatever of mental weakness; on the contrary, he gave the impression of a man of keen and clear intellect, who had made a thorough and exhaustive study of the subject, and who was capable of observing and of analysing his own symptoms with the utmost precision and exactness. He was well acquainted with the more recent theories put forward by scientific men, with a view to accounting for the mysterious phenomena of spiritism without admitting the existence and action of "spirits," and he had tried them all in connection with his own case. But they had all failed to meet it, and he had finally been driven to the conclusion that the spiritistic explanation was the only rational and intelligible one, and certainly the one which best and most fully accounted for the strange experiences to which he was himself subject.

The circumstances were briefly these:

M. (as I propose to call him) had read of the mysterious phenomena which were asserted to

occur in connection with spiritistic practices and, finding that they were vouched for by men of scientific standing and eminence, he had determined to make some experiments himself. For this purpose he had purchased a Planchette and had, during his many hours of leisure, sat down from time to time with a view to obtaining "communications." At first, having sat quite alone and only for short periods of time, there had been no result whatever; but after a while, the sittings having been extended to an hour and longer, slight movements of the Planchette and an occasional attempt at the formation of a letter, had seemed to promise ultimate success. The sittings, having after this been held daily and for hours at a time, distinct and intelligible writing had at last come readily and freely, and the practice had become the constant and all-absorbing passion of M.'s daily life. At first the "communications" had been of a vague and indefinite character, scarcely admitting of the conclusion that an intelligence other than, and different from, that of the sitter was at work. But, in the course of time, there had come steadily growing indications of the presence and action of an independent mind and personality, the

latter claiming to be that of a deceased woman, who, after a short but gay life, had passed out of the body, and who was now anxious to attend to, and to take an interest in, M.'s temporal and spiritual concerns. M. had at first persistently refused to adopt the spirit theory, and in spite of many assurances and much evidence to the contrary, had continued to work the theory of the "subliminal" or subconscious self. Fully convinced that, as the late Mr. Myers has so ably shown, there is in every man a second or submerged self, an *alter ego*, which only under certain abnormal conditions gives evidence of its presence but which, nevertheless, has powers and capabilities far larger and more extended than those of the normal self, he had gone on believing that the messages must, in some unknown way, be extracted from the depths of his own inner personality. Still, even at this time, he appears to have had much cause for surprise and reflection. He told me that his amazement had known no bounds when he had found that the most secret and hidden things of his life appeared, in some mysterious way, to be known and registered somewhere, and that they were continually being reproduced by the action of

the little board racing across the paper—under his own hand and, while his own mind was occupied with an entirely different train of thought. Incidents, he said, which had occurred to him years before, and which had entirely passed from his memory, were thus being referred to with minute exactness. Answers which he had given to questions put to him in writing, and which had never been uttered by the sound of his voice, were repeated fully and accurately. Actions of which he would now be ashamed, but which no eye of man had seen, were recalled to his memory with startling fulness and accuracy. But what had surprised him more than all this was that his thoughts and doings were being commented upon in a way wholly foreign to his own tendency of mind, another mind, different from his own, and guided by an entirely different moral standard, sitting, as it seemed to him, in judgment upon him, and condemning or, as the case may be, approving of his motives and actions.

Indeed, every attempt seems to have been made at this time by the mysterious Planchette writer to prove to M. the presence of an independent intelligence. Questions asked

by him concerning matters of personal and general interest were promptly and intelligently answered. Views were expressed which were in some instances wholly different from those formed by himself, and there was throughout it all the action of a subtle, logical, and highly intelligent mind, superior to, and, in fact, wholly transcending, his own level of thought and education. Thus gradually there had been forced upon him the conclusion that these "communications" did not after all emanate from some mysterious portion of his own personality, but from a mind and intelligence external to himself. This impression had been strengthened when, upon admitting a personal friend to one of his sittings, a communication had been made to the latter which had left no doubt as to the presence of another mind, and which had made a convert of his friend once and for all.

As time had gone on and the intense fascination of the subject had been making itself more and more felt, M. had gradually come to employ the Planchette at all odd times and for all kinds of purposes, and slowly but steadily his mind and life had become controlled by the communications which it con-

veyed. The writing had then come with such increasing facility that the employment of the little board had been no longer necessary. M. had been bidden to simply take a pencil in his hand, to place it upon any bit of paper, and to adopt a calm and passive attitude of mind. The pencil would then write easily and rapidly, expressing opinions, conveying information, and answering questions. This new method certainly had had the advantage that it could be put in practice at almost any time of the day or night. M. had thus been summoned to write and to receive communications incessantly, the unseen intelligence constantly interfering and asserting its authority in a way that admitted of no opposition.

Even at night, when retiring to rest, M. had habitually placed paper and pencil by his bedside in order to be able to write at once when summoned to do so. And he had frequently been awakened from his sleep for this purpose — much to the detriment, of course, of both his mental and his physical health.

After this there had come a still further development of the mystic power of writing.

The pencil, too, had been discarded, and M. had begun to trace the writing with his finger in the air. He could thus, it appears, write out a message at some length and be fully able to read it afterwards, just as though there was a piece of paper suspended in the air and a pencil in his hand, and in the course of time, this appears to have led to a kind of permanent double action of the mind. While one half of his faculties seemed to him to be controlled by his own unchanged personality, the other half was controlled by "the other intelligence," each wholly independent of, and distinct from, the other. To him, therefore, there had remained no longer any doubt as to the distinctness of the two personalities. One would possess information, for instance, which the other did not possess. One would determine upon a certain course of action which the other condemned or disapproved of. One would express a view or an opinion diametrically opposed to the opinions of the other. Thus, in carrying on a conversation with a friend, M. would give an answer according to the best of his knowledge and judgment while the "other one" would at once comment upon that answer, and agree with it or differ from it, as the case

may be. These differences of opinion would sometimes lead to something very much resembling a quarrel, each personality determining in the end to stick to its own opinions. The words were spoken in M.'s mind in a way he found it difficult to describe, since it could not be said to precisely correspond with any known way of communication; but it was an effectual way so far as he was concerned. He could always hear and understand clearly and distinctly, and there could never be any doubt as to the intention and meaning of "the other intelligence."

For a time these two personalities had existed on a fairly friendly footing, one making certain concessions to the other, and both being quite content to differ. M. seems to have derived a certain amount of morbid pleasure from this incessant and internal conflict, and occasionally to have thwarted and defied his mysterious adversary. The latter had invariably shown a disposition to give in and to submit to a superior or, at any rate, a different judgment. He had been invariably obliging and conciliatory. But as time had gone on there had been increasing evidence that "the other one" was gaining an ascendancy over M.'s own

personality. M. had found it increasingly difficult to resist the "other one's" suggestions and directions. A will stronger than his own had been quietly, but very persistently, insinuating itself. When the signs of this increasing control had become more and more marked, and M. had begun to notice that he was no longer sole master of his mind and of his judgment, he had taken alarm, and had made an effort to shake off the strangely dominating influence. This, however, had proved an absolutely hopeless task, the "other one" still showing a disposition to submit, but no disposition whatever to depart, and, after a short conflict, M. had invariably given up the effort.

Things had thus gone on for many months, when M. had at last awakened to the fact that a great transformation was passing over his moral and intellectual nature. The "other" mind and will had permeated his entire being, and he was now conscious that he was ceasing to think his own thoughts. In short, there could be no longer any doubt that fetters were being woven round him which he was daily growing more incapable of breaking. He had

become the slave and servant of the influence which was dominating him! His physical health, too, had seriously deteriorated, and his friends, beginning to feel that his spiritistic experiments were doing him harm, but steadily refusing to believe in the account which he gave of the matter, had persuaded him to take a holiday and to go abroad.

It was upon his return from this holiday that I met him, and that he gave me a full and explicit account of the whole matter. One further development, however, had taken place since then. The "control," as I now propose to call the "other one," had clearly and distinctly disclosed its true character—evidently one of diabolical malice and cunning. It had told him that the entire plan of operation had, from the beginning, been a prearranged one, the aim being to gain M.'s confidence and to induce him to continue the writing practices. It was the frequently induced *passive attitude* of the mind and of the will which had been aimed at, and which had made it possible for the "control" to get possession (as he himself termed it), and to establish that intimate subtle union between M. and himself which had now made it absolutely impossible for the former to

offer any kind of opposition and resistance. This condition of servility and submission having thus been effected, there was no longer any cause for the "control" to conceal its true character. And with this admission there had come symptoms of a most startling and alarming nature. The "control" had given evidence of absolute power, not only over M.'s mental life, but also over his physical organs, showing repeatedly how easy it would be for him to cause M. to destroy himself. No one, he had declared, could trace the true cause. "Suicide during temporary insanity" would be the verdict—the stupid verdict of a stupid and ignorant jury. Upon M. inquiring why he had thus been chosen to be the subject of another's malice and persecution, he had been told that the secret lay in the peculiar mystic bond which, by reason of moral, or rather immoral, similarity, had long united them, but which had been drawn tight by the spiritistic practices (the passive mind) in which M. had indulged. These had made it possible for the spirit to draw quite near, and to effect that vengeance and punishment which would otherwise only have commenced after M.'s physical death.

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With these disclosures, the "control" had commenced a system of almost diabolical torture. It would, for instance, arouse M. in the middle of the night, and rehearse to him the immoral deeds and unclean thoughts of his past life; repeating the story over and over again, and driving M. almost to distraction. At another time it would, in some very plausible and dangerous manner, show its power over M.'s physical organs, and only desist after M. had fully admitted his own helplessness, and his utter inability to resist the extraordinary invasion.

With these manifestations, M.'s lower sensual life had received a powerful and irresistible impulse. His lowest passions were being assiduously fanned and while his intellectual life remained strangely vigorous, there was creeping upon him a kind of moral stupor and paralysis.

No treatment, either hypnotic or medicinal, had had the slightest influence upon the strange phenomenon, and M. had now given up all hope of help from this quarter. Some of the authorities whom he had consulted did not believe in "obsession" or "possession";

others ascribed it to hysteria and idleness. Help there was none!

It was impossible, after listening to M.'s story, to entertain the idea of mental delusion or of self-deception. M. himself had, for months together, contemplated the possibility of this solution of the problem, and had acted accordingly. He had soon convinced himself, however, that it was wholly untenable; and considering all the circumstances of the case, I felt at once that it would be useless to suggest it. It was clear that here was a phenomenon, the character of which is at present wholly unknown to mental science, and the possible cause of which is foolishly ignored and overlooked. Still, I felt that if I was to be of any help and service in the way of effecting a deliverance, it would be well to have further proof of the presence of an intelligence really different and distinct from the personality of M., and I consequently proposed one or two experiments.

Before I had time to carry these out, however, a strange thing occurred. I was telling M. what I proposed doing, when he suddenly exclaimed, with a hideous grin: "Shall I tell you what 'he'

is saying to me?" I replied: "Never mind 'him.' We will, at any rate, try the experiment." Upon this, M. said excitedly: "But he is determined to speak to you, and I shall have to let him do it." Throwing himself back into an easy-chair, and closing his eyes, he gave one or two gasps and twists, and then passed into a quiet, trance-like state. The next moment, however, his eyes partially reopened, a violent contortion shook his frame, and his features, undergoing a strange and startling metamorphosis, assumed those of an old man of a most crafty and cunning type. A rasping voice and a defective enunciation suggesting a toothless mouth, poured forth a stream of the most horrible and unheard-of blasphemies. It denounced my utter and hopeless folly in attempting any kind of experiment with a view to dislodging the obsessing intelligence, and declared its determination to remain in possession at any cost, and under any circumstances. When I persisted in discrediting the presence of a personality other than, and different from, that of M., a very frenzy seemed to shake the frame of M., and words of the most abusive kind were levelled at me.

"What fools you are," it exclaimed, "to tamper with things which you do not understand; to facilitate the invasion of spirits, and then to deny that they exist; to play with hell-fire, and then to be surprised that it hurts and burns! I challenge you to propose any kind of experiment to test my utter and entire independence of the person of this idiot, with whom I can do absolutely as I please. See how I can handle him and ill-treat him! I am now beating and hurting him, and he can do nothing to defend himself."

With this there appeared red spots in different parts of M.'s face, and he groaned as if in physical pain. Upon this I replied that I would accept the notion of an independent intelligence only if it could be shown to be a fact, and if it could be clearly demonstrated. From this point of view there could be no objection to the proposed experiment.

"First of all, however," I continued, "if you are an independent being, tell me something of yourself. Who are you? How came you to be associated with M. in this mysterious manner? What is the character of this subtle bond that binds you to him? I am deeply

interested in the study of these phenomena; help me to understand them better."

The voice now became calmer and more subdued, and there was poured into my ears a story of vice and evil-doing which was pitiful in the extreme. But the story was told simply and straightforwardly, and it was impossible for any unprejudiced listener to doubt the good faith and integrity of the intelligence which told it. It could not possibly be some kind of production out of the inner consciousness of M., as it was the consistent and connected history of a man who had lived a very *long* life, who had seen the world, and who knew a very great deal of the human heart and of human nature. It was the story of a long and misspent life, with an account of what might well be supposed to be the after consequences of such a life added to it.

"What fools men are," he went on saying, "to doubt the great truths of the Christian Religion; to forget the awful responsibilities of life and possible misery in the future! Could they but know and see my suffering, and feel that there is no hope—no hope!"

Falling in with the general tenor of this conversation, I suggested the possibility of a

change consequent upon better knowledge and upon a reformation of heart and mind. A violent contortion was the reply, the voice screaming out: "There may be hope for the devil; there is none for me! My destiny is fixed." And then there came again a stream of the most terrible blasphemies, the strange being cursing God for having created him.

"But," I inquired, "why trouble and torment this unfortunate man? What harm has he done you? What do you gain?"

"Because he is in nature and disposition like myself," he replied; "and do you not know that like attracts like? There is a mysterious bond which binds me to him, and which draws me into his sphere of life. I am bound to be with him, to entice him to further evil and to torture him. At first I could only influence and pollute his mind; but now I can entirely direct and control his body. I can move it as I like, and do with it as I please, and I enjoy torturing him. Has he not done so-and-so, and so-and-so?"

Here followed a description of M.'s life and history which sounded very improbable, and which I received, of course, with a considerable amount of reserve. I felt that this might possibly be a morbidly exaggerated account of

some irregularity of conduct of which M. had been guilty. I replied:

"I do not believe your story. It is easy to assert these things; it is not so easy to prove them."

Upon this the intelligence challenged me to test the truth of its statements by asking M. himself, and for this purpose proposed to awaken him — "to call the wretched carcase into life," as he expressed it.

There was a moment's pause, during which M.'s eyes closed, while his body trembled and twitched. Then they opened again, with a scared and wild look in them. He inquired excitedly: "What did he say? What has he told you? Tell me all about it. Tell me what has happened."

Of course, I had considerable hesitation in repeating the story which had been told me, and consequently endeavoured to evade the answer. But, as he persisted, and I felt that it was certainly important to know the truth, and the whole truth, I told him all. Poor M. covered his face with his hands, and exclaimed: "My God! it is all true."

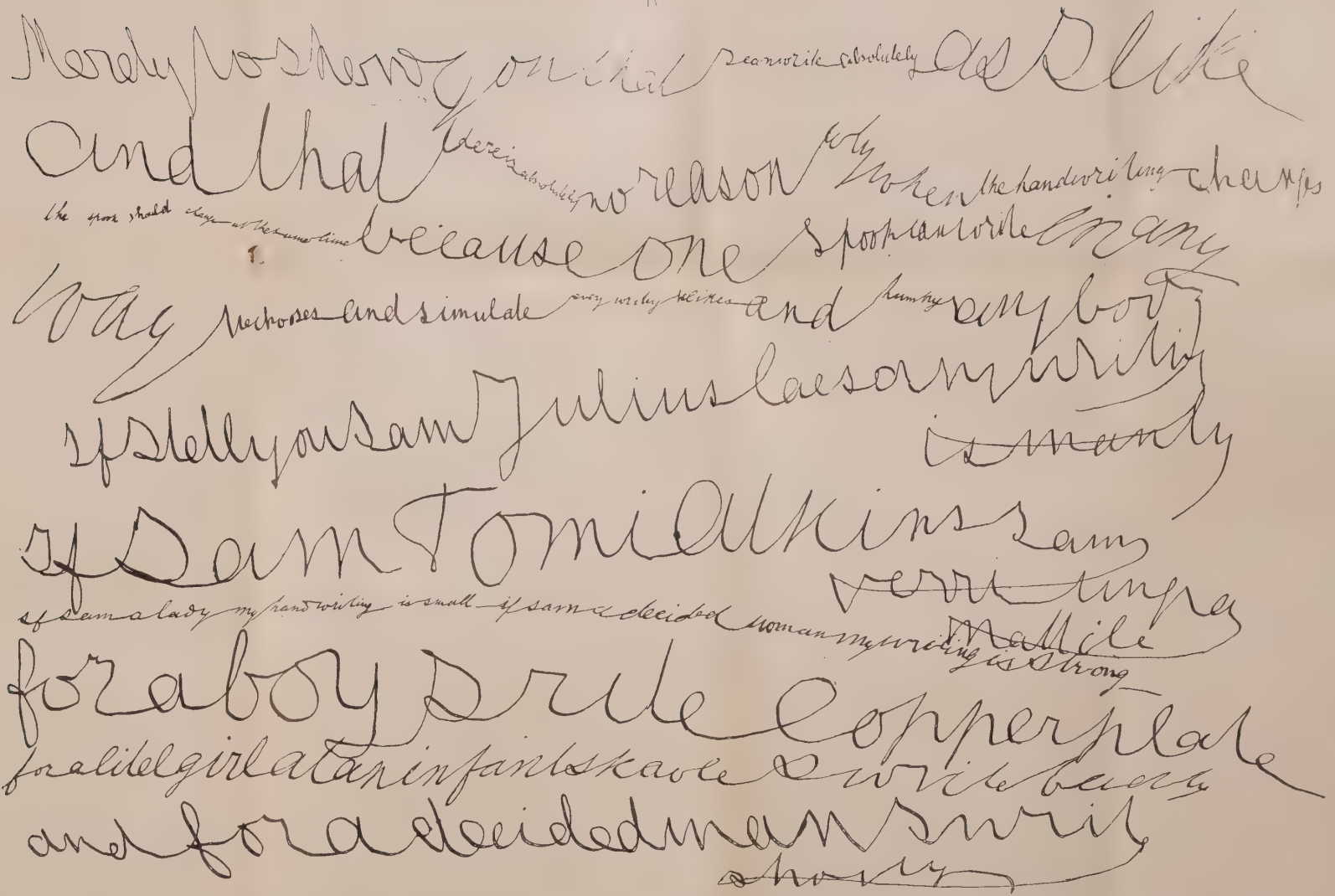
But I was not yet satisfied, and consequently proposed the following experiment: I placed

M. in an easy-chair, moved a small table upon which his left hand could rest and move easily up to his left side and, putting paper and pencil and the Planchette upon it, I asked him to place his hand lightly upon the Planchette. In his right hand I placed a *Globe Newspaper*, from which I asked him to read out to me rapidly, and without any pause, the leading article. While he was doing this under the observation of a member of my family, I again addressed the intelligence, continuing the conversation where it had been broken off at the termination of the trance, and asking questions as to statements and references made in it. The experiment was strangely successful. M. remained in a perfectly normal condition and went on reading the newspaper thoughtfully and consecutively, while the intelligence was answering my questions and pursuing with me an entirely different train of thought. It was certainly a weird performance, which has left its effect upon my mind, and which has forced me to the conclusion that, in this instance at any rate, two entirely different and independent intelligences were at work.

It is impossible for me, from the circum-

stances of the case, to give further details. I may say, however, that in spite of my most earnest and determined efforts, the intelligence was not dislodged. I put many searching questions concerning the future life, and the laws which govern it. The answers which I received were thoroughly consistent and intelligible. They all point to the fearful responsibilities of life: its thoughts, and words, and actions. I was told again and again that they go to form the character and shape the destiny, and that from that destiny there is no escape.

The intelligence maintained throughout that it was an evil spirit who had been drawn towards M. because of his evil life, and who had gained entire possession in consequence of an *habitual passive state of mind* brought on by spiritistic practices. The intelligence maintained that *all* the spirits invited by these means are evil spirits, with evil intent, in whatever guise they come, and that men are fools in not discerning the truth. Spirits, it declared, have access to every fragment of a person's past history, to every secret thought and feeling, and they can consequently simulate any personality, living or dead. The most striking evidence, it maintained, is no proof of



Merely to shew you that I can write absolutely as I like and that there is absolutely no reason why when the handwriting changes the spook should change at the same time because one spook can write in any way he chooses and simulate any writing he likes and humbug anybody. If I tell you I am Julius Cæsar my writing is manly. If I am Tomi Atkins I am veri ungramatticle. If I am a lady my handwriting is small—if I am a decided woman my writing is strong—for a boy I rite copperplate. for a litel girl at an infantskoole I write badly and for a decided man I write showy.

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identity. Spirits will take any amount of trouble, and practise every sort of deception, in order to gain control of the mind.

When I questioned the truth of this statement, and quoted instances in which I thought identity had pretty well been demonstrated by the Society for Psychical Research, the intelligence seemed to be highly amused, and causing M. to seize a pencil, it proceeded to show me what it could do. It wrote out the subjoined paper (Plate IV.) with the most inconceivable rapidity, without the slightest pause, and while M. was talking to me about an entirely different matter. It will, of course, be seen that there is a certain similarity underlying the different forms of writing which points to a single author: but I doubt whether this would have been discovered if each form had been obtained separately, and at different times. To me, personally, the paper will always remain an interesting document, considering the manner and the very extraordinary circumstances under which it was obtained.

V

During a trip on the Continent, two years ago, I made the acquaintance of a man engaged in commercial pursuits, who told me incidentally that he had acquired the power of "automatic" writing. His attention had been directed to the subject by an article which he had seen in one of the Daily Papers. It had become a source of entertainment and amusement to him and, at the time I met him, he was not in the least interested to discover what the source of the strange messages which he was constantly receiving might be. He did not believe in the spiritual nature of the human soul, or in any survival of the human personality after death; consequently he did not believe in "spirits." He thought that the phenomenon must be due to the action of some kind of undiscovered and at present unknown law of our mental life.

It had thus gradually become a habit with him to resort to the mystic writing on all possible occasions—to ask advice in perplex-

ing questions and situations, and to be guided by that advice. His physical health seemed to be satisfactory, except that he complained of a feeling of pressure over the back of his head, which would come on suddenly, and which would continue, and sometimes increase in severity, until he yielded to the writing impulse. As soon as the message had been given this feeling would pass away; but there would come a sense of general lassitude, and prostration, which wine or some kind of alcoholic stimulant alone would remove. He maintained that he was fully master of his thoughts and actions; although, of course, it was necessary, for his physical comfort, to take the pencil and to write whenever the impulse to do so was upon him.

I pointed out some of the dangers of these experiments, and the possibility of intelligence or intelligences, other than his own, operating behind the scenes; but this suggestion only caused him very great amusement. He promised, however, to let me hear from him in the event of any "development" taking place, and in any case to keep me informed as to his experiences.

From a friend of his I ascertained that his

family were troubled about the writing, as they felt convinced that it was doing him harm. He was, in their opinion, *not what he used to be.*

Last year I had a short report of this case. There were also sent for my inspection some curious drawings. They were, I was told, very fair representations of the faces of different members of this man's family, and of some of his friends; but they were caricatures. The features could be readily recognised, but they were distorted by an unnatural and hideous expression.

A few months ago, finding myself unexpectedly on the Continent, I made inquiries regarding my interesting chance acquaintance and was told that he had, but a short time before, met with a very severe accident, and that he had only just been discharged from the hospital. I communicated with him at once, and asked him to meet me, or to allow me to call upon him as soon as convenient. When we met, others were present and he merely gave me an account of the nature of the accident. He then called me aside, and whispered to me: "I am so thankful to meet you again. I cannot tell anybody here, because they do not understand; but my accident was caused by 'the

spirits.' I believe in them now; but I have done with them!"

At my request he gave me later on a full account of what had happened since I had last seen him, and the circumstances were these:

The promptings to take the pencil and to write had gradually, but very steadily, increased; and, being accompanied by very severe pressure over the head, he had never been able to resist the impulse for any great length of time. The amusement of the thing had worn off with the increased and compulsory frequency of the experiment, and he had begun to consider the whole thing rather a nuisance. He had consequently again and again offered determined resistance, even at the risk of injuring his health and of passing sleepless nights, but had always had to give way in the end. Thus (by this physical means) a kind of domination had been established over him, and he had gradually been forced to the conclusion that there must be some kind of intelligence at work. He could not conceive how a mere tendency or habit could so thoroughly establish itself and gain the mastery over the will. Asking this question one day, the pencil had informed him that he was under spirit influence, and that he must do their

bidding. They had it in their power to ruin him. Thoroughly alarmed now, he had made renewed efforts at resistance, which had, however, proved wholly fruitless. At this time the impulse had assumed another form. Instead of the prompting to write, a thought suggesting some absurd and sometimes quite unreasonable action, would come into his mind, and regardless of all his arguments to the contrary, the pressure in his head would increase to such an extent that, anxious to obtain relief, he would finally yield to it. He had thus, on several occasions, found himself placed in very absurd and unseemly situations.

On one occasion he had entered an electric tram by the end door and had been sitting in his place for some time, his mind engaged with some business affair, when he had experienced a sudden and irresistible prompting to do what he was not permitted to do on that tram line, *i.e.* to jump off the tram while it was in motion and then, running along by the side of it, to jump on again to the front part. The suggestion being so wholly absurd, to say nothing of its danger, he had combated it for some considerable time; but, finding all resistance in vain, and the physical discomfort increasing every

moment, he had felt himself at last compelled to yield to it, and had jumped off the tram. He had succeeded in reaching the front portion, and had been on the point of jumping on to it, when he had lost his footing, was dragged along some considerable distance, and the wheels passing over his feet, both were crushed. When I saw him they had both been amputated, one at the ankle, the other up to the instep. He now bitterly regrets not having taken the advice I had given him some time before; but what he felt most keenly was that he could not get his friends to believe his own version of the story, and that he had to keep the truth from the outside world.

"My friends would think me mad," he said, "if I told them what I know to be the cause of the accident."

With this final catastrophe the impulse to write, and the peculiar physical sensations, had entirely disappeared.

VI

THERE is a certain class of spiritualists who are quite prepared to admit that grave dangers attend the experimental investigation of occult phenomena, and that it is a serious matter to attempt to enter into communication with the unseen intelligences of the spirit world, but they maintain that this must be expected from the very nature of the thing. It is, according to their dogmatism, one of the fundamental laws of the world of spirit that "like attracts like," and that discarnate spirits are bound to gravitate towards those spheres in which intelligences of a like, or at least of a similar, character and tendency and moral disposition, live, and move, and have their being. Thus the pure and noble and elevated "draw" pure and noble and elevated intelligences, and the low and immoral and impure draw low and immoral intelligences. It is a question of psychic affinity—of identity of psychic magnetism. The mischief, therefore, which occurs at

séances, and the innumerable instances of what looks remarkably like deliberate and malicious deception are, they say, mostly due to the investigators themselves. Many of them are apt to enter upon the experiments in a flippant spirit, for the mere amusement of the thing, without any higher aim or motive, and certainly with no sense of the seriousness of the undertaking and of the responsibilities which are being incurred. Thus it comes that, in so many instances, low and worthless phenomena only are obtained, and that a form of research which involves such exalted considerations, and which might be made to render such high service to mankind, is degraded into mere vulgar trickery and juggling and becomes a source of the gravest possible moral danger. But let the aim and purpose of the experimenter be pure and elevated, let the inquiry be undertaken by men of good moral character and consistent life, let their sole desire be the discovery of truth, and the phenomena will be found to be of a high and elevated order; spirits of a like nature and disposition will be attracted, they will have something good and useful to communicate, and there will, under such conditions, be no

attendant unpleasant incidents, such as physical prostration, attempts to deceive or to unduly control the mind, or to withdraw from the physical organisms of the sitters nervous strength and vitality.

This plausible theory has been accepted by the larger proportion of spiritualists as a sort of elementary truth and, because of its apparent reasonableness, it has found the most widespread credence and acceptance. It is certain, however, beyond all possible doubt, that this theory does not stand the test of experience and of really careful investigation. All spiritistic literature pretty well disproves its truth—a fact which would perhaps be frankly admitted did not the theory form the very foundation and corner-stone of the entire spiritistic system. It is instinctively felt that if it can be really shown to fail, that then the entire system tumbles to pieces. It would then no longer be possible to offer a reasonable explanation for the vast amount of trickery, deception, imposture, and personation which is practised at séances, and the true character of the phenomena would be at once apparent. The larger proportion of sensible and right-minded persons clearly would shrink from

experiments which, however interesting they may be, are shown to involve such grave moral and physical perils.

Now it must be admitted that there is about this popular spiritistic theory a kind of elasticity which makes it almost impossible to establish its falseness. It can be stretched so as to include almost any case. If, for instance, in spite of all possible precaution, and under the most favourable circumstances, unpleasant phenomena occur and personation is practised, a way of escape is almost always to be found without in any way invalidating the theory itself. "Either the previous occupiers of the séance-room have not been above suspicion, and have left some psychic influence behind which has made the entrance of low intelligences possible." "Or the medium, by reason of the sensitive nature of her organism has, during the day, in the ordinary ways of life, attracted some impure spirit who has attached himself." "Or the earlier sins and failings of one or other of the sitters are, in some subtle way, bearing fruit, and are calling a spirit sphere into operation which the later excellence of life has not succeeded in overcoming and in rendering inactive." "Or some fault in the magnetic chain

has opened a door by which just one single low spirit has slipped in, who is, however, bound to be overcome by-and-by by the purer magnetism of the higher spirits present."

In this way the mind, predisposed in favour of the theory of spirit affinity, almost always discovers a way of escape out of every difficulty, and invariably finds means of hiding from itself the real facts of the case. But the truth is that this popular theory is wholly untenable, and that experience is constantly disproving it. There is, as a matter of fact, no known method or condition by which the fatal influences, moral and physical, of the séance-room can be counteracted, or by which the so-called "higher" phenomena can be secured. All honest spiritualists admit this, and many more would do so were it not that they are fully aware that an admission of this fact would entirely undermine their system. I have made a careful study of the matter, have personally and patiently searched out the history of many extraordinary cases, and have communications in my possession which seem to me to settle the matter absolutely. It is certain beyond doubt that a person of the most elevated life and character, with no past history of which

he need be ashamed, with the most exalted motives and the sole desire of ascertaining the truth and of carrying on his investigations with the greatest possible precaution, and with an observance of all the supposed laws of the psychic life, is, in the pursuit of spiritistic experiment, exposing himself to the greatest possible moral and physical dangers, and that all these qualifications and circumstances are no guarantee whatever of his successfully escaping or counteracting them. An ounce of fact, after all, is worth a pound of theory and, in this instance, the facts are accumulating every day. Why is it that so many persons, at one time so ardent in their defence of the "grand truths of spiritism," mysteriously drop all connection with the subject all at once, and never care to refer to it again? The popular impression is that they have become convinced that it is all delusion and the trickery of mediums. But the fact is that, in a far larger number of instances, such persons have had what is termed "bad experiences," and these have been of such a character that there has been left in the mind no room for doubt. I know of numerous instances of this kind, some of which exhibit an amount of cunning and

malice on the part of the unseen operators, such as the ordinary mind can scarcely conceive. The superior knowledge of these mysterious intelligences, and the facilities which they appear to possess in the way of obtaining information respecting the past history and most intimate affairs of their victim's life, and their consequent power of using this knowledge to the best possible advantage, makes detection almost impossible. By the time the truth is discovered the mischief is generally done. The net is so carefully and skilfully drawn about the victim's feet that he has the greatest possible difficulty of escaping. Where this is happily accomplished by the exercise of a great deal of will-power and by determination and perseverance, the physical health nevertheless often remains impaired for many months, and even years.

I have before me the history of one case which may be regarded as typical in character, and into which I have made the most careful personal inquiry. The victim was a young man of well-balanced mind and of irreproachable life and character, whose sole motive for entering upon these investigations was the discovery of truth. Strongly influenced by

the prevailing agnostic tendencies of the age, and unable to accept the Christian position, he seemed to see in these communications the promise of a noble, a comforting, and at the same time truly scientific philosophy of life. He certainly brought to the inquiry an entirely open and unprejudiced mind, a judgment in which those who come in contact with him in the ordinary affairs of life, repose every confidence. There is nothing in his past history, or in the conditions and circumstances under which his investigations were carried on, which can in fairness be said to account for his more than painful experiences. His life and character were above the average, his aim was pure and good, his physical health was satisfactory; he was a man of good judgment and power of observation, and he certainly used all those precautions which his acquaintance with the literature of Spiritualism would suggest. In spite of all this, he was utterly and shamefully deceived from the beginning, his physical health was slowly but deliberately undermined, and there was a time when the asylum seemed to be the most probable end of the whole matter. And it is surely worth recording that, in this instance,

the unseen operators themselves admitted that "a diabolical agency had been at work, that an exceptionally malicious influence had contrived to obtain a footing; that it had, however, notwithstanding its cunning, overreached itself by being in too great a hurry to attain its end." It is unnecessary, in this instance, to describe in detail what really occurred. The main point here is not the story itself, but the *character* of the experimenter, his life, his aims, the cautions which he observed—a man, in short, who, according to the spiritistic tenets, should have obtained the best and highest results.

Some year or two after these extraordinary occurrences, when the gentleman in question had entirely recovered his health and spirits, and the painful remembrance of these things alone remained with him, I wrote to him again on the subject, inquiring how the whole matter now presented itself to his mind, and whether he remained convinced that the strange events recorded were to be ascribed to an actual, thinking, willing personality, entirely separate and distinct from, and independent of, his own. The late Mr. Myers' theory of the subliminal self—the possibility of many of these strange

phenomena emanating from that "other self within us," which is capable, apparently, of accomplishing under certain conditions some very extraordinary things—seemed to me to be worthy of the most careful attention and investigation, and I was wondering how these occurrences would look from the point of view of this theory, re-examined in the light of sound reason, and of a well-balanced judgment. The following are the chief points of the letter which I received in reply, and which, it seems to me, are well worth recording :

"Am I still convinced that the influence then exercised upon my mind was due to some discarnate intelligence, or do I think that my own subliminal consciousness was at work? It is a matter which admits of no doubt to my mind that the influence was an *outside* one, so to speak—of course, not incarnate, and not necessarily discarnate. The influence *may* have been that of a post-mortal, or of a *sub*-human being, I cannot tell ; but it seems likely to have been that of *a discarnate human being*. What little I have been able to gather of the meaning of the 'subliminal consciousness' (as in the Psychical Society's 'Proceedings,' etc.) makes me satisfied that the suggestion of

subliminal consciousness is wide of the mark. The thoughts written through my hand were sometimes not of my normal self, and equally not of any other 'self,' of which I have yet had the tiniest glimmering of an acquaintance.

"Agreeing with you that the subject of Spiritualism is a deeply interesting one, I regret to be bound to agree with you further—that spiritualists seem to ignore or to minimise the dangers of research. . . . The sitters, I am satisfied, were animated with sincere intentions in all respects, and I am driven to the conclusion that some things which are supposed to be safeguards against evil influences are ineffective. Briefly, my present views are partially suggested by the following. The phenomena (of writing, etc.,) in my own case and that of my wife were always accompanied by a serious diminution of nerve force, the writing leaving behind it a feeling of fatigue and exhaustion. This of itself now prejudices my mind against any further experiments at present, at such a price as even the physical and nervous drain alone involved. The 'borderland' appears to swarm with spiritual Matabele, and I am not fitted (as some are, no doubt) to act as

fighting explorer or pioneer adventurer in such a dusky realm, however full it may be of possible (spiritual) gold-mines. Then, too, after my experience I learned that such things were so very usual that I need not be concerned over-much. It is clearly, then, a series of risky experiments rather than a course of elementary spiritual education.

"The absolute futility of any attempt at identifying spirits, is another discouraging or unsatisfactory circumstance. It is no proof that the spirit communicating is A. B. if he tells me of words or circumstances (supposed to be) known only to A. B. and myself. Who knows how many spirits are more or less eavesdropping in every time and place! The alleged 'friend' of a few years ago (while he was writing through me, and turning my ideas upside down through his extraordinary 'counsel' and hypocrisy) certainly was possessed of knowledge of my present history unknown to anybody else, showing familiarity with thoughts which had passed through my mind five years previously but which had never been put into words to anybody. Now, if one's diary of thoughts and acts is an open book for one spirit and another to read at

his convenience, nothing that he may resurrect to one's mind is any proof that he is trustworthy, or this, or that, any more than would be the case if a shoeblack read over one's shoulder what one had written and had lying before one, and claimed, by virtue of his knowledge, that he was one's father, or mother, or dearest departed friend. Where are the spiritual police? Does mob-law rule in the borderland? and if not, how come all these obsessions to take place, and frauds and confidence-tricks to be played upon those who are neither fools nor knaves?

"My object in taking any steps at all in the direction of Spiritualism was the discovery of truth, and that not for the intellectual joy of its pursuit and possession, but for the ennobling of the life and character. . . . That is still my object, but at present Spiritualism does not seem so likely as I had hoped to assist me in that direction . . . since I dare not invite possible spiritual burglars and company promoters to assist me in the accumulation or disposal of heavenly treasure."

NOTES AND COMMENTS

I

That occurrences of the character described in the preceding pages are not merely confined to rash and inexperienced investigators, to whom the general laws of spirit communion are more or less unknown, and that they can therefore be easily and reasonably accounted for, is evident from the fact that they have taken place with the best and most experienced mediums of whom we have heard in recent times and of whom, if the assertions of Spiritualists be true, we have certainly a right to expect better things. Unfortunately, this fact is not brought to the knowledge of the inquiring public with that clearness and distinctness which the interests of truth and the immense importance of the subject would certainly seem to demand.

It is well known that D. D. Home, the famous American medium, was frequently tormented by intelligences of a malicious and

mischievous character, and that he became again and again alarmed at the influence which, in spite of strong assertions to the contrary, they were gradually gaining over his mental and moral nature.

During one of these fits of alarm he made up his mind to join the Roman Catholic Church, and to have done with Spiritualism. The spirits ridiculed what they called his foolishness in imagining that he could thus easily escape from them; they told him however that they would withdraw from him for a year, but that at the end of that time he would revert to his former practices.

Home was received into the Catholic Church —an event which was attended by some very extraordinary occurrences (described to me by an eye-witness)—and his duties as a Catholic brought about the cessation of all spiritistic practices for a time. But it is a fact that a year after this event he was induced to hold a séance in Paris, at which the Emperor Napoleon was present, and that subsequent to this he resumed his mediumistic career.

Eglington, another famous medium, whose astounding achievements are told by spiritual-

ists with bated breath, has entirely disappeared from view, and does no longer appear as a champion of the cause. His later history is wrapt in mystery, and his present whereabouts are either not known or must not be revealed. He cannot be made to utter a word on the subject.

Mr. Stainton Moses, formerly a clergyman of the Church of England and master at University College, a cultivated man, and the author of many interesting books on Spiritualism, who possessed the most accurate and extensive knowledge of the subject, had at one time of his career the most painful and distressing experiences, which certainly caused him the most serious misgivings, and very nearly led him to sever his connection with the spiritistic cause altogether. This fact, too, is not very generally known, and is not brought forward with any great distinctness in spiritistic circles.

In "Modern Mystics and Modern Magic," Mr. Lillie writes: "Over and over again he (Mr. Stainton Moses) has told me that his mediumship passed through one very grave crisis indeed. Evil spirits assailed him. His

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days were perturbation, and his nights were terror. He saw the spirits; he heard their voices. Every sense was assailed. The foulest stenches spread through his bedroom. He tried the Indian Yoga, so far as to give up fresh meat and wine. This only made matters worse. . . . To an earnest clergyman all this created terrible doubts. Often and often Mr. Stainton Moses thought his 'guides' devils from hell" (page 108).

At another place we read: "Instead of boldly dictating to the unseen agency the conditions under which it was to act, Mr. Moses seems to have weakly suffered himself to be led, or rather driven back, over a line of retreat against the promptings of his normal and more healthy mind. Thus, in December, 1872, he writes that the communications are 'generally marked by evidences of intellectual weakness,' and 'that it is, *prima facie*, extremely unlikely that the spirits of the noble, the learned, and the pure should be concerned in the production of physical and intellectual phenomena which, when not silly, are frequently mischievous, and when distinctly true are not new, and being new are not true. . . . The voice from beyond the grave is uncertain,

and when it can be tested, frequently delusive, if not absolutely and mischievously false.' Yet, according to Mr. Myers, he came in a few months more to believe completely in the identity of the communicating intelligences. A still sadder instance of this decadence is to be found in the gradual surrender of the medium's lifelong convictions on religious subjects, a surrender made with open eyes, and in defiance of his own clear and even forcible indications of the 'spirit teachings' as contrary to Scripture, and to the fundamental dogmas of the Christian Faith."

A correspondent, writing to one of the spiritistic journals, says: "I then (having discussed the matter with a friend and heard his objections) remembered the lies the spirits told us; how they outraged our most sacred affections by personating those who were most dear to us," etc., etc.

A gentleman, we read in another journal, when away from home sought to get communications, by telepathy, from his wife, to whom he was passionately attached. He succeeded beyond his highest expectations — his hand

wrote quite freely, and he was delighted with this easy means of communication. But, after several days, the nature of the communications altered, and he received what purported to be a confession from his wife, in which she made confession of unfaithfulness and gross immorality. His mind became almost unhinged, and with difficulty he kept himself from committing suicide. There does not seem the slightest suspicion that the communication was true, and he is, I believe, again restored to his wife, from whom, for a short time, it naturally caused some estrangement. He is a gentleman of education, an abstainer, and of good moral life. If this is by any means a common experience, I think you would agree with me that it would be better left alone.

In 1881, Canon Wilberforce was asked by one of the Anglican Archbishops to carefully examine into the subject of Spiritualism, and to read a paper detailing the results before the Church Congress. Speaking on this subject at St. John's Church, Westminster, Canon Wilberforce gave it as his opinion that Spiritualism was a kind of bastard recrudescence of pagan practices, which at one time were common

amongst the human race and in the dark days of Judaism, there being instances of divination, of writing on tables and walls, of doubles, of mysterious sounds, of being able to touch fire without being burned; in fact, all the phenomena which had been reproduced over and over again to-day. He had also found traces of so-called Spiritualism in the early Church, and he believed that the inner meaning of the Epistle to the Colossians was a protest against Spiritualism. Speaking of the rise and progress of Modern Spiritualism, he expressed it as his opinion that there was a great amount of danger in it. Experience had taught him *the untruthfulness of many of the communications that purported to come from that other dimension of space. He could not recount the great number of messages which appeared to be truthful, but which, on investigation, were found to be utterly false.* He had, moreover, heard of cases where unfortunate young people, especially girls, had been morally, mentally, and physically ruined through becoming entangled in occult and spiritualistic practices.

A spiritualist of twenty years' standing,

writing of his experiences and conclusions, says :

"Communications I sometimes received at circles seemed to be absolutely diabolical. I have seen a medium, at other times calm and respectable, suddenly, under some mysterious influence or control, break out into a tirade of the most horribly blasphemous and obscene language, which drove all the sitters from the table, to which no persuasion would ever afterwords induce them to return. I have listened to communications about matters quite beyond the knowledge of anyone present at the circle, which contained such a subtle mixture of truth and falsehood as to suggest the guile of the serpent; and the communications, when carefully analysed by the light of subsequent tests, were unmistakably designed with a degree of cruel cunning almost beyond mortal wickedness, to entrap men to the undoing of their very souls. Indeed, in all spiritual investigation in the form of circles, there is a dangerous fascination which draws on the weak-minded into a maze of mental confusion which often ends in monomania or insanity. It almost needs a sceptical mind, or one with a mathematical or

scientific bias, to preserve an equal balance in a long course of spiritualistic investigation. . . .

"My own painful experiences of spiritism, which continue up to this present time, teach me that it is a perilous thing to tamper with. I believe—nay, am absolutely convinced—that, under favourable circumstances, it is actually possible to attract disembodied spirits from their ultra-mundane sphere to this earth, and to hold intelligent communication with them, and that sometimes spirits come quite unexpectedly without any seeking on our part. *But they do not go away so readily!*

"The dangers to the medium and sitters consist in the circumstance that spirits of a low and earthly order are most easily attracted by frivolous and foolish circles. The moment the door is opened, it may be by the presence of persons of like inclinations, of ignorant or credulous mediums, who unreservedly submit themselves to control, or men of immoral or intemperate habits, troops of so-called 'dark' spirits rush in and indulge those propensities to silly tricks, lying deception, and temptation to evil in which they took delight in their former earthly state."

Some years ago the present writer was in correspondence with a lady of high moral character and very superior intellectual attainments, who had developed the power of automatic writing to a very considerable degree. She could write intelligently and fluently for hours at a time, and the communications made to her were certainly not part of any consciousness of which she had any knowledge. Her chief "control" was supposed to be the spirit of a deceased celebrated novelist. He dictated to her portions of a new novel, entire essays of a theological and philosophical character, and constituted himself in every sense her guide, philosopher, and friend. He was with her, and wrote through her hand, at all hours of the day and night. The lady was delighted with the nature of the experiment, and with the interest and entertainment which the writing afforded her. She had not a fragment of doubt or misgiving about the matter in her mind.

I made a careful study of the case from the beginning, examined a good portion of the writing, and made a note of all the attendant circumstances and phenomena. To the lady's unbounded indignation, I finally expressed it as

my opinion that the communicating intelligence was not that of the novelist in question. She went on with the writing for a couple of years more, during which time I had no news of her. She then wrote to me to the effect that she had been terribly and cruelly deceived, and that she now knew for certain that the spirit in question was not a novelist, but an arch-deceiver.

Not very long ago, a widow living near Paris tied her two little children together and drowned them in a dirty pond, in order to send them after another child which had died. This little child had spoken to her at a séance, and had told her that *she was dull in the other world.* The woman was, it appears, in other respects a practical, sensible person.

"Great consternation," we read in a recent issue of a religious journal, "has been caused in the ranks of the German Spiritists by the announcement that Dr. Egbert Müller, the well-known leader and exponent of the spiritistic cause in Germany, has been received into the Catholic Church. Dr. Müller, who is a highly cultivated and thoughtful man, has for so many

years played a prominent part in Berlin intellectual and literary life that this unique and highly significant event has naturally aroused the most widespread attention and interest. It has been commented upon by many of the leading German papers, and there has, of course, been the usual expression of both informed and uninformed opinion.

"Dr. Müller's change of attitude seems to be no hesitating or half-hearted one. He has, before an assembly of several thousand persons, expressed it as his conviction that modern Spiritism is 'a bold scheme of Satan for the destruction of the Church of Christ,' and it would seem that this conviction has been arrived at AFTER MANY YEARS of CAREFUL and APPARENTLY UNBIASSED INVESTIGATION."

A correspondent, apparently of considerable experience, writing to the same journal, says:

"Personally, I believe that the invocation of spirits carries with it great danger, for the simple reason that most of those who return are admittedly of an extremely low (in every sense) nature, and I have just the same objection to associating with them spiritually that would prevent me from having anything to do

with them were they in the flesh, ghostly 'corner boys' not being a whit more interesting than the living samples.

"The foregoing is a moral objection, and as such is not entirely convincing, as it might be urged—and quite fairly—that it is just those who are low in their manners, thoughts, and instincts that require uplifting. Granted! And if one were certain of a spirit's identity, much might be done. There is, however, a very real danger that one would get contaminated as a direct result of missionary zeal, and the end might be—and often is—obsession by an evil spirit, and consequent moral disaster. So that, unless a person be given superhuman strength, the chances are that the evil forces of the unseen world would be too strong, and result in his or her ultimate ruin.

"It must be quite understood that I do not say that every spirit with which one comes in contact is of an evil nature; but I do insist that the overwhelming majority is bad, and that the investigator has no possible means whatever of testing the spirit's pretensions. Just as in daily life one often finds evil designs marked by loud professions of religion, so there can be no guarantee that the beautiful

and highly moral sentiments to which spirits sometimes give expression are not an artful device to injure unsuspecting inquirers, etc., etc."

In a pamphlet entitled "Necromancy and Ancient Magic in its Relation to Spiritualism," Professor W. F. Barrett, of the Royal College of Science for Ireland, and one of the Vice-Presidents of the Society for Psychical Research, writes:

"It is, of course, as true now as then that these practices are dangerous in proportion as they lead us to surrender our reason, or our will, to the dictates of an invisible and oftentimes masquerading spirit, or as they absorb and engross us to the neglect of our daily duties, or as they tempt us to forsake the sure but arduous pathway of knowledge and of progress for an enticing maze, which lures us round and round."

Or, as he says in speaking of a case resembling obsession, and reported in *Light* for 2nd and 9th May, 1896: "Possibly this is an instance of duplex personality; more probably I think it is, what it purports to be, a lower influence, or 'spirit,' acting through the medium. Evil as well as good agencies doubt-

less exist in the unseen; this is equally true if the phenomena are, or are not, due to those who have once lived on the earth. . . . The danger lies, in my opinion, not only in the loss of spiritual stamina, but in the possible disintegration of our personality, in the liability to lose that birthright we each are given to cherish, our individuality, our true selfhood, just as in another way this may be impaired by sensuality, opium, or alcohol."

Or, as the Professor said in a lecture delivered at St. James' Hall: "As regards Spiritualism, I, for one, recognise that there are certain dangers, and we do well to be on our guard against them. These dangers do not apply to a purely scientific investigation of the phenomena, but seriously affect those who, from idle curiosity, venture upon these treacherous psychical quicksands, or attempt to build a faith upon the same insecure foundation. . . .

"The views I entertain of the probable source of the purely physical manifestations may be wholly erroneous, but holding those views, and also a belief in the historical records of Christianity, it seems to me that the Apostle Paul, in the Epistle to the Ephesians, points to

a race of spiritual creatures similar to those I have described, but of a malignant type, when he speaks of beings not made of flesh and blood inhabiting the air around us, and able injuriously to affect mankind. At any rate, all must admit the wide learning and profound spiritual insight of the great Apostle, and that, granting the existence of a spiritual world, it is necessary to be on our guard against the invasion of our will by a lower order of intelligence and morality."

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II

If it be really a fact that the spirits of the great and good are, under favourable conditions, able to communicate with us, and to give evidence that they are still interested, as one might well suppose, in the work of their past life on earth, and in the intellectual and moral progress of mankind, one has surely a right to ask: "Why do they not make some really valuable disclosures?" The field of history or of science, as has been rightly said, would offer a splendid sphere for the exercise of such powers. Disputed points, which have long caused disagreement amongst savants, might thus be settled; interesting problems might be solved, and one single disclosure of this kind clearly would do more for the cause of spiritism then all the marvels of the séance-room, the trance orations and physical manifestations of which the world has heard so much. The spirits might thus easily help forward both our knowledge and their

cause most effectually, and not only silence the tongue of the scoffer, but enlist the intelligent interest of the scientific world. Without in any sense departing from the ordinary pathway of learning, and without abandoning the appointed method of acquiring knowledge, we might cite the great men of the past, and learn from them what we cannot hope to learn without them, but what it would be useful and helpful for us to learn.

It has to be admitted that, so far, nothing whatever has been gained in this direction. The spirits of the wise and great indulge in tall and high-flown talk about the future life and its conditions, our own utter earthliness and ignorance; they tell us of things, the truth of which we can neither prove nor disprove, but they do not solve a single problem in science or philosophy, or settle a disputed point in history. While the memory of their past earth life seems to be accurate enough in trivial matters, it fails them entirely in every really useful and important point. Indeed, the ignorance of some of these ancient dead is so astonishing, that one is tempted to ask them: "How have you employed your time throughout the past centuries?"

If spirit-intercourse be a natural process permitted by God, if we are to expect from it greater things than those accomplished by the Christian doctrine, so that we may look upon it as a step forward in the process of our moral and spiritual evolution why, we may surely ask, do not the good spirits come to the aid of those helpless ones left behind here? This surely would be the first and necessary essential in a creed, or system, or philosophy for which so much is claimed. Where are those friends of humanity who, during life, were drawn towards the helpless and ignorant, and the morally depraved? Why are the admittedly low and earth-bound spirits entrusted with the high mission of enlightening mankind, and of leading it onwards towards a truer and nobler view of life? Why do these same spirits find pleasure in playing silly and foolish tricks? Why are they guilty of conduct which, in a thousand instances, proves them to stand morally lower really than the sitters themselves?

One very serious flaw in the entire spiritistic teaching and philosophy is manifestly the circumstance that even the highest spirits differ,

and that hopelessly, in their descriptions of the conditions of the other world and life. There is nothing approaching unity of ideas underlying their respective systems. On the contrary, these systems are absolutely destructive of each other. "When we look at these spirits more closely," writes a French author (Anatole Barthe), "one discovers with no small surprise that they are Catholic amongst Catholics, Protestant amongst Protestants, Jews amongst Jews and even Materialists amongst Materialists." In Paris and Buda-Pesth they teach reincarnation; in England and America they deny it. Swedenborg's controls proclaim the truth of what is practically the doctrine of the orthodox heaven and hell. The learned spirits, writing through the hand of Mr. Stainton Moses, teach a kind of Broad Church doctrine out of which all definite and distinctive Christianity is refined away. To the simple questions concerning the after life, of which, considering the tone of superior knowledge and enlightenment which they are so apt to assume, we may well expect them to have reliable information, they give the most diverse and often mutually contradictory answers, leaving the thoughtful inquirer in a state of the most hopeless bewilderment. All

this makes it too evident that the spirits are either practising deliberate deception, and make it their object to mislead and to mystify their disciples, or if they are really human beings who have lived on the earth, that they have no definite truth of any importance or value to communicate to us. In either case it is difficult to see in what the advantage of the teaching of these beings, and the supposed progress and enlightenment by which it is supposed to be followed, can be said to consist.

It is maintained by a large number of not very critical and often very imperfectly instructed spiritualists, that the modern and now so well-known psychical phenomena will throw a new light upon the miracles of the New Testament, and that a future age will look upon Christ as a sort of superior medium. Who was acquainted with many secrets of Nature, and Whose strange influence upon the minds of men is to be attributed to His extraordinary moral and spiritual insight, and to the consequent fact that He was in every sense in advance of the ideas of His time and generation. It was, of course, to be expected that this bold and plausible assertion would, in an age like

ours, find ready acceptance with very many minds. It is so very simple, and apparently solves so very many difficulties, and there is in it that which appeals in a very special way to a certain weak element in our human nature. Few take the trouble to investigate such an assertion more closely, and to find out how far it is really supported by solid evidence! As a matter of fact, there is no evidence for the truth of this assertion at all, except it be a forced interpretation of certain passages contained in the New Testament, and a one-sided selection, presented in a mutilated form, of certain abnormal occurrences. It is by a judicious adaptation, and by the omission of other qualifying circumstances, that some of Christ's miracles are thus made to resemble the phenomena of the séance-room. Spiritualists, moreover, always omit to mention those miracles which bear no sort of resemblance to the modern spirit manifestations, and which at once put Christ in a class by Himself. For instance, Christ commanded the wind and the waves, and they obeyed Him. He caused a fig-tree to wither at His word, a leper to be cleansed, and thousands to be satisfied with a few loaves and fishes. He healed all kinds of sickness,

persons born deaf and blind, and He awakened a man to life whose body had been four days in the grave; He caused the unclean spirits to depart. And in doing these things He acted with calmness and certainty, *and in full consciousness of the power which dwelt in Him.* He caused no chain to be formed, required no kind of preparation or experiment. He had no need of darkness. His results were *certain*, and wholly independent of "conditions." He never went into convulsions or waited for the "coming" of a spirit. He knew beforehand what would happen, and what He desired happened immediately, even at a great distance, at His mere word. And whatever the attitude of the people, He did not work miracles to satisfy the curiosity of the multitude, but as a proof and attestation of His own divinity. He did not seek honour before men, but rather withdrew from the multitude. He did not give show-séances to the learned; He caused no tables to dance or knives to fly through the air in order to amuse, or frighten, or impress the people. Never did His wonder-working hand play tricks or inflict injury on anyone! He used His mysterious power solely to help and to heal. What an entirely different aspect the

matter assumes, and how baseless this popular assertion as to the mediumship of Jesus becomes, when *all* the circumstances are taken into consideration, and the whole truth, not a mere mutilated fragment of it, is stated!

In the same way clever and very convincing parallels are apt to be drawn between the miracles and supernatural manifestations of the first ages of the Christian Church and the latter-day occurrences, showing these to be apparently of the same character and kind as the former, and therefore probably of the same origin. Many not very careful thinkers are powerfully influenced by this mode of argument. But here too it is clearly a case of fitting the facts to a preconceived theory, and not of constructing a theory according to the facts. The most important points which distinguish the one form of manifestation from the other, and which destroy the entire argument, are often lost sight of, or perhaps deliberately and purposely ignored. Thus all the manifestations of the New Testament clearly, and those declared to have occurred in the lives of the saints and martyrs, were *spontaneous* and unsought-for occurrences. They are evidence of

the action of an unseen world, but acting according to laws wholly unknown to man, and in no conscious sense initiated by him. They almost always have a higher aim and purpose. What have they to do with the phenomena of the séance-room for which a circle has to be formed, for which "conditions" have to be created—which are deliberately induced in order to gratify human curiosity? What similarity, except in the outward form, can there be said to exist between them? And how can any rational person maintain that because they are similar in form, they are also similar in origin? If manifestations of the first order took place in the times of Christ and in the early days of the Church, and in the lives of saintly men, it is also certain that in these very times the apparently identical spiritistic manifestations, too, were already known and warned against, and that these latter were considered to be very different in their effect and character and origin. We are all acquainted with what is recorded in the New Testament on this subject, and from the lives of the saints we know that they were often years in doubt as to whether the phenomena in question were the true ones, and whether they might really

be taken as indications of divine assistance and favour. The character of their origin was determined by the peculiar effect which they had upon the character and the spiritual life.[1] It was manifestly already known then that the genuine phenomena could be imitated and artificially produced (sometimes through some abnormal state of health and of body), and that they could not, therefore, always be regarded in that light. But this surely changes the entire aspect of the matter, and shows the popular spiritistic view to be an untenable and erroneous one.

If we examine the *moral* aspect of modern Spiritualism, the first question which we have to ask ourselves is: "What is morality likely to gain from it, and from the spiritistic doctrine of the other life?" The answer to the first part of this question may be read in the entire literature of modern Spiritualism, and it is one from which there is absolutely no escape. Care and caution, and the observance of laws and "conditions," may modify the admitted dangers connected with spiritistic practices,

[1] See the Life of St. Teresa.

they cannot possibly remove them, and it is certain that these dangers are sometimes of a very grave character.

The exercise of mediumship is almost always attended by physical exhaustion, very frequently by complete mental prostration, producing a kind of moral paralysis and inertia of the will. Sometimes there are cataleptic seizures, contortion of the muscles of the face which are terrible to witness, and which are all of them conditions awakening disgust in all healthy and normally constituted minds—a state of feeling far removed, surely, from anything approaching moral aspiration or elevation.

It is maintained by spiritists that many of these repulsive accompaniments of the manifestations are to be ascribed to a too frequent and prolonged exercise of the mediumistic faculty, and that many of them are known to disappear when that faculty is rightly and properly trained, and when it is called into operation judiciously and discreetly. But, on fuller reflection, this argument must surely be seen to be self-destructive. It will be conceded by most right-thinking persons that if a thing pertaining to the moral and spiritual order be

really good in itself, we cannot possibly have too much of it. Being as we are, by the very nature of our bodily life, seriously weighed down and hindered by a host of lower tendencies and inclinations, over which we are, by the exercise of our higher but infinitely weaker leanings and impulses, to gain the victory, we have surely a right to assume that we cannot have sufficient of that which, good in itself, is calculated to strengthen and establish and confirm these impulses.

But how sadly does experience disappoint our expectations on this point. The too frequent exercise of the mediumistic faculty, spiritists fully admit, is accompanied by physical and intellectual prostration of the medium, by a corresponding deterioration and at times entire cessation of the phenomena, and by the creation of a morbid and unwholesome frame of mind on the part of the sitter. How different from the effects attending the cultivation of the true spiritual faculty of which we have records in the Gospels. The Christian is bidden to pray without ceasing, to incessantly and actively cultivate intercourse with the unseen world of spiritual realities, to keep that world in view as the one supreme

aim and purpose of his life, and to constantly develop and cultivate that spiritual faculty by which supernatural things are seen and apprehended. Why is it that the frequency of the operation here does not lead to deterioration of life and of health, but rather to the quickening and building up of the highest side of our nature, and to the gradual elimination from it of its grosser and earthly and morbid elements?

And whatever the scientific explanation of these physical accompaniments may be, is it likely, considering the debasing effect they have on most minds, that Providence would employ such ignoble and unworthy means with a view to the higher moral advancement of mankind?

And that morality has nothing to gain from the *teaching* of the spirits must be evident from the fact that there is really no such thing as definite teaching, the disclosures made being, for the most part, vague and colourless, and, what is really worse, contradictory. They are clearly subjective impressions and views only, largely, if not wholly, influenced by the views of the particular medium through which they come, and corresponding to the degree of

his or her mental or moral culture. They are manifestly never based on any great objective truth clearly recognised after entrance into the other state, and fully known and admitted by spirits of every kind and degree.

The doctrine which is most generally taught by the spirits, probably because it is the most popular one with spiritualists, is that of continual progress, of an existence in the other state, which is practically a continuation of the present one, with its wants and enjoyments, its follies and perversities. And what is this but a sinking back into the old philosophy of Paganism? According to this view, the present life does not appear as a stadium in which a race has to be run in order to obtain a prize, a certain end, but as one of many halting stations in the course of a long journey. The other world is only a new and somewhat modified edition of this one. The sensualist may readily defer his improvement until he reaches another sphere of being. The consequences threatening him are not so very terrible, and there is always the thought that he must improve in the end.

But even this popular and universally ac-

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cepted doctrine of progression is not really supported by the facts which spiritistic experiments demonstrate and by the statements which many spirits have made, and are making. These latter would, in many instances, seem to indicate retrogression rather than progression. Pure and elevated souls who, in this life, were incapable of uttering a falsehood, stoop to the most silly and foolish tricks and deception. Savants and men of genius, who have here on earth exhibited an unusual amount of culture and enlightenment, and whose ideas have lifted thousands to a higher sphere of mental life and being, return as fools and idiots, who cannot even spell their name correctly, and who do not understand the simplest technical term in science or philosophy.

Many of them know nothing of God; others employ a phraseology which would tend to destroy all faith in God, and duty, and responsibility, and which would seem to indicate that they have, since their translation into the next sphere of being, sunk to a decidedly lower level of moral and religious thought. The tendency of their utterance is, most certainly, in many instances, towards the removal of the sanction of religion, and to

the creation, in other minds, of doubt in the existence of God.

And, however plausible the theories may be which spiritualists are able to offer in explanation of this curious circumstance, and however much these may commend themselves to certain minds predisposed in favour of the spiritistic creed, the cautious and observant student of the matter can scarcely fail to discern the serious flaw which underlies them, and which completely annihilates their claim, when it is tested by its own evidences.

But it is surely a further striking circumstance, which does not seem to occur to very many minds, that Jesus, even when taken on the lowest ground and regarded as the spiritualists regard Him, as a mere seer, or prophet, or medium, or clairvoyant, should, by the entire tenor of His teaching, have flatly contradicted this favoured doctrine of progression, and should have taught one which proclaims the very opposite to be the truth. Deducting from the Gospels the entire scholastic element, and all that doctrinal development which has been called the afterthought of theology, allowing for all that the modern rationalistic method and the higher

criticism may substract from the teaching of the Galilean, the fact surely remains that there is in the Gospels not a shadow of support for this doctrine of progression.

On the contrary, from beginning to end, this present earthly state is described as the one and only sphere of the soul's educational life (in our ordinary sense of that term, at least) in which the character is to be formed and its future is to be determined. "Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation," may be said to be the great central principle underlying the entire record of the New Testament, and without it two-thirds of it would become simply unreasonable and incomprehensible. But if Jesus was a medium or a clairvoyant, how are we to explain this extraordinary misapprehension or oversight? How was it that He did not tell us the truth, but rather laid upon us so great and heavy a moral burden as the doctrine of future punishment most surely involves? Did He not know the truth? or did He knowingly and deliberately mislead us? Did He leave it to the spirits of the séance-room to enlighten mankind? And how are we further to account for the circumstance that it was His teaching—a teaching of which this

terrible and supposed false doctrine formed a prominent part—that regenerated the world's moral life rather than the other?

But even granted that the séance-room does occasionally yield a helpful utterance, and that spirits have manifested who have displayed superior discernment and knowledge, what evidence is there that there is progression in the spiritistic sense? A spirit can, as spiritists admit, help himself to the moral ideas and intellectual knowledge stored up in the minds of some of the sitters, and the information he conveys may not be his own property at all. The mere communication of moral sentiments, moreover, is surely no more evidence of moral culture than intellectual attainment is.[1] A professional

[1] I remember a correspondence which I had years ago, and before my views were definitely formed, with an old and experienced spiritualist who was a man of considerable culture, and who had apparently studied the subject very exhaustively. The late Mr. Stainton Moses' astonishing messages were at that time receiving a great deal of attention, and I had asked my correspondent's views as to the origin and credibility of these striking communications. He replied that he considered these messages to emanate beyond question from beings wholly independent of the personality of Mr. Stainton Moses, but that there were about them certain characteristics which marked them, to his mind, as the high-flown talk of "clever but fallen intelligences." It was only after many years, and after many a sad experience, that I began to understand the real meaning of these words.

philosopher or philanthropist expressing the most elevated sentiments may, as all men know, be a very monster morally. The literature of Spiritualism itself is constantly bearing witness to this fact, and is demonstrating to all unprejudiced minds that in this entire realm of inquiry there has, so far, been discovered no single spot where there is solid ground under our feet.

The claim, finally, that an intellectual conviction of the continuity of life has led many to break away from materialism, and to adopt a truer and more ennobling philosophy of life, sounds reasonable, and there are probably many earnest inquirers into the subject who are not without hope that some such benefit may be the final outcome of their own investigations. But the facts before us do not, unfortunately, go to confirm and strengthen this hope. The spiritistic view of the other state is but a modified kind of materialism, which has no necessary connection with the moral life, and which chiefly appeals to that side of our nature from which high moral effort and endeavour can scarcely be looked for. The prospect of a necessary and inevitable and never-ceasing

progression, much on the lines of the present life, is apt to lull the human soul to sleep, and to rob it of that constant stimulus to a life of higher attainment and greater purity which the Christian system, and a ready obedience to the promptings of conscience, are known to create. The first impressions which spiritistic phenomena are apt to cause in the sceptical mind are no doubt calculated to awaken the dormant spiritual faculty, and to bring the mind face to face with the realities of the unseen world; but it is in very few instances only that this can be said to have become the stepping-stone to higher things. Familiarity with the powers of this unseen world, with spiritual beings of a very doubtful character, who themselves proclaim that they know little more than they knew here, who are silly and frivolous, and who seem to have passed through no purifying or cleansing process, so entirely revolutionises the instinctive conceptions of the other state, that the good anticipated and claimed for these proofs of the life unseen is hardly ever attained. On the contrary, it has to be admitted that the evidence of a future life thus furnished is apt to lower the moral tone rather than to elevate it,

even in the case of the sceptical mind, which is thus deprived of that sense of uncertainty which, with thoughtful persons, unquestionably tends to a certain caution and circumspectness of life.

It is a fact universally acknowledged and admitted even by experienced spiritualists that the influence of the séance-room is on the whole debasing, and that it tends to banish all true devotional feeling and true religion. It certainly creates a most grotesque conception of the other world in the thoughtful mind. What a world such a mind can scarcely fail to ask itself, that must be in which the fixed, mistaken ideas of this present life are not removed and cleared away, but continue to operate for an indefinite time: in which there is nothing approaching objective truth, but in which any view, right or wrong, may perpetuate itself—what effect is the prospect of life in such a world likely to have on the moral character?

THE END

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